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TWO WILD AND CRRRRRAAZZY GUYS! MADLIB AND PREFUSE 73
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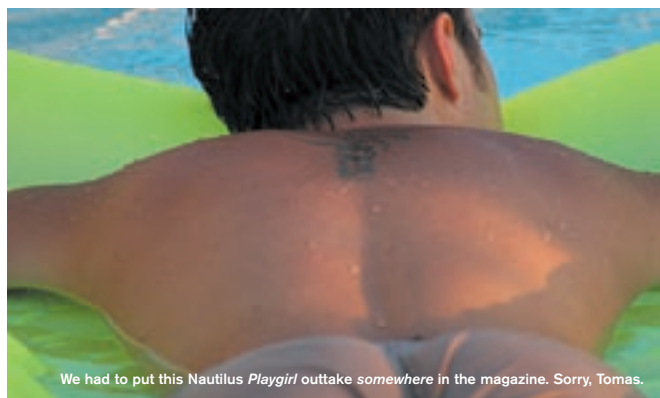
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ED'S RANT 07.03

ED'S RANT



Julie Baldwin

We had to put this Nautilus Playgirl outtake somewhere in the magazine. Sorry, Tomas.

LIGHTNESS OF BEING

From what I can tell, life in Montreal—at least during the warm months—is pretty damn good. At this year's fourth annual Mutek festival, a five-day series of minimal techno and experimental music concerts, seminars and gatherings, people are indeed (to quote R.E.M.'s cliché) shiny and happy. Young people abound on the streets and clubs in natty attire, colorful shoes and foxy haircuts. Perhaps it's just built-up elation from months spent in the snow and darkness, but it really seems more like Canadians have a social system that actually works to the benefit of artists. Indeed, the Canadian, Austrian and British arts councils all support Mutek, as do multiple cutting-edge media and music technology companies—a far cry from the assistance that a similar American festival might receive. NEA, where are you?

Wander around graffiti-mural-enhanced hipster mecca rue Saint-Laurent during the weekend, and you might see internationals such as Pole, Thomas Koner or Matthew Dear casually scanning store windows, or Canadians like Richie Hawtin or Deadbeat at a café. The atmosphere at Mutek before, during and after events is decentralized, not star-driven or steeped in artistic reverence. It's simply a celebration of essential new music.

Coming from America, a nation on slippery ground politically, economically and socially—where gun violence, poverty, lack of health care and mediocre artistic development are dressed up in a gaudy red, white and blue-striped wardrobe purchased from Old Navy—Montreal's laid-back, cheerful and open society recalls scenes from Michael Moore's *Bowling For Columbine*. Moore goes to Canada and finds that people feel safe enough to leave their doors unlocked. Meanwhile, back in the States, our government is intent on closing even more portals to its independent artists.

On June 2, 2003 the Federal Communication Commission voted to repeal parts of its own statutes regarding media ownership in the United States. This decision cleared the way for companies such as Clear Channel, Viacom, Disney, Fox and AOL Time Warner to control even more radio and television stations and markets. Opponents as disparate as the National Rifle Association and the ACLU lined up against the proposed deregulation, which had only one public hearing before Congress in the last year.

At least among *XLR8R's* readers, there seems to be a general feeling that, despite the emergence of niche media such as satellite radio, internet broadcasting and cable-access television, viewers and listeners have less choices when it comes to the major "free" (non-cable television and radio) broadcast outlets. We suspect that we're being coerced and controlled at every stage of media exposure.

What I mean is, everything is so damn streamlined: the movie comes out, the soundtrack's single gets blasted on every radio station, the toy is in the shops and there's a food tie-in at Burger King. Each of these vehicles has a commercial advertisement on TV along with a poster in the bus stop window. Even if you loathe, say, *Too Fast Too Furious*, there's no avoiding its cultural saturation. Competition is nowhere to be found. And increasingly, major companies and advertisers want to cash in on independent media's last remaining bastions of revenue. They want to throw us in their cultural landfill.

Throughout Mutek, artists, distributors and labels alike talked about the need for indie media alliances—label groups promoting each others work, artists banding together to form music publishing networks and overall, more cooperation between parties that are currently viewed as competitors—*URB*, *XLR8R*, *Remix*, *BPM* and *Grooves*, for example. It really has reached the stage where, unless we look out for each other's interests, we'll be made irrelevant when someone like AOL comes along and buys the rights to our names, domains and culture. A better world is possible, and the artists and organizers at events like Mutek prove it. While Montrealers can't stop the snow from blanketing the town six months out of the year, for Mutek's one-week period the sun shines on the arts and makes anything possible.

-Tomas

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: Domestic subscriptions are \$16 (one year, 10 issues) and \$32 (two years, 20 issues), Canada \$40 (one year) and \$80 (two year), all other international are \$50 (one year) and \$100 (two year). Subscribe by credit card online (www.xlr8r.com) or send payment to XLR8R Subscriptions, 1388 Haight St. # 105, San Francisco, CA 94117. Payment made out to "XLR8R Magazine," US funds only. International orders must be paid by credit card or international money order. Questions? Email subscribe@xlr8r.com or subscribe online at www.xlr8r.com.
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BIG THANKS TO ... Ralphie Dee at UDJ, Kara at American Apparel (Girl, you rock like 100 stages at Coachella), Sean Holland at Syntax, Sue Marcus, DJ Rasta Root, the excellent J. Miller on a last-minute photo tip, David Lopes at Gingko Press, Rebecca Metzger, Brett at Offshore Recordings, a big thanks to the Stones Throw crew, Jeff Wade and Nick Miranda, The Last-Minute-Save-a-Production-Manager's-Ass Posse: Julie Baldwin, Christopher Drury, Michael Schmelling (the most dependable guy in NYC) and Peter Rentz, Mike Battaglia, iced soy lattes for keeping the mind awake and the body combustible, Anna and Nettie, JoeB and all at KingStreet/NiteGrooves, Warp Records posse, Willie Mack, Carlos Nino at Temple Bar, Sarah Storm, Deborah and all at Mezzanine, Dublab crew, Sascha Lewis and the Flavorpills.

ON THE COVER: Madlib and Prefuse 73 photographed by Christopher Woodcock

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DJ ANNA
 Just so you sucker DJs know, DJ Anna (aka Anastasia Klafter) is just plain terror! And just when you thought you could hang, in steps her pit bull partner-in-crime, Nettie. When this SF native's not interviewing people that hate to be interviewed (like Madlib and Prefuse), she's holding it down at her weekly party "Cops Fear Pimp Turf War" at Dalva in SF and nerding out at www.djanna.com. 1200 Hobos, holla!



SANDRA MANN
 Sandra was born in 1970 in Gross-Gerau, Germany and since then she's been rocking it all over Deutschland and beyond. Her work has been exhibited in the Hannover Expo, the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, and the Kunsthalle Mannheim. She also sports fucking fantastic haircuts and has shot Russ Gabriel, Jazzanova and the Sonig label for XLR8R.



PETER RENTZ
 Peter Rentz is a commercial artist/graphic designer living and working in Los Angeles. When he is not heading up the LA office of GH avisualagency™, he is helping his partners run their Eastern Developments Music label or battling traffic on a 1984 Gitane track bike. He has contributed design and illustration to such illustrious publications as XLR8R, Archinect.com, Arkitip and Elemental.



JESSE TERRY
 Basically, if it doesn't shred, it's not in his collection. Counting Yngwie Malmsteen, Racer X, and Satch among his personal faves, Jesse can play guitar much, much faster than you, probably with either hand, and he's totally got more feel too. It has always been a dream of his to write for Kerrang. Though he was brung up in Philly, Jesse currently lives in San Francisco.

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LETTERS

All letters printed "as is."

MORVERN MISSIVE

Dear Frosty,
Thank you for your piece on *Morvern Callar* and its intense, plot-driving soundtrack. My only concern is that you did not mention that the film is based on the book by Alan Warner, whose writing talents and use of music in the novel laid the groundwork for the movie. I feel that your readers should be informed of this fact, especially since Warner delves even deeper into the realm of the title character's mind in regards her relationship to music by providing the track listing of the mixtapes she records in order to escape from the reality of her lover's suicide. Though Ramsay's vision as a director is crucial to the beauty and artfulness of the film, Warner deserves full credit for this philosophically tragic story and for the irony, metaphorical meaning, and understanding of Morvern's character conveyed through the specific songs he chose.

My other question is about the music in the film itself, which should be directed to Ms. Ramsay if possible: what track is playing during the dancing scene at the rave in Spain? I want it. Best,
Amber Drea (Chicago, IL)

BROKEN BEATS

I just got my new issue of your magazine and the INCITE disc was folded in half. I know it's not your fault. My mail lady is pretty pissed off all the time. She doesn't even wear her uniform, if that tells you something.

Anyway, I was wondering if you could be kind enough to send out a duplicate, you know since I collect them like baseball cards. I would really appreciate it and I would tell all my friends how cool you guys are.

Zack Onisko (San Francisco, CA)

NOW WE ARE TEN

Congratulations to you and the entire XLR8R crew on your 10th anniversary. While more and more "music" mags choose to focus on pics of scantily-clad bodies and those with good dental plans over reviews and interviews, DJs over musicians, and hype over criticism, it is good to see XLR8R continuing to actually be about the music, while maintaining a balance and changing with the times. I've purchased a lot of different American-published music magazines over the years, though purchasing less and less as the years

have gone by (for the above reasons). Here it is 2003 and XLR8R is the only one that I continue to purchase on an every-issue-see-it-buy-it basis. Great to see you still standing head and shoulders above the others. Here's to another 10 years. Keep up the great work.
Andrew Duke

LUDI(CHRIS)

Regarding Chris Brann on your cover (issue#68): is that finger in his ear to prevent all of the hot air from escaping from his undeserved fat head? No one here in Atlanta likes that asshole; he's a rude, stuck-up son-of-a-bitch and doesn't even DJ at his own gigs. And he dare not rear his pasty white head in the five points unless he'd prefer it kicked in. What were you thinking putting him on your cover?
Stephan C (Atlanta, GA)

AT W.A.R. WITH A.R.E.

With regards to A.R.E. Weapons, I have heard the record and it is TRASH!!! I cannot believe you guys gave it top billin' in your "Prefix" column. XLR8R used to be my only hope for a magazine with any semblance of quality control, but alas, you have succumbed to the great hype machine as well. Lemme guess, you were trying to get some Imitation of Christ for a fashion spread and as a stipulation had to include A.R.E. Weapons. What's next, a Princess Superstar cover!!!

Faded...

Devin Bennett (Via email)

CORRECTIONS: In issue 66's album reviews Toronto's Visionary were mistakenly listed as being from Detroit. Their label, Nice & Smooth, is also from Canada." In issue 67's techno reviews, our write-up of Marc Deon's "Free Fall Rmxs" incorrectly attributed the inside cut to Lindsey Green; it is by Marc Deon. The review should have mentioned that Audiovoid and Lindsey Green are the same person. In issue 67's "Vehicle Vanguard," we incorrectly identified a photo as Scion's "stock sound system." In the issue 67 review of Dan Bell's new mix CD, *The Button Down Mind Strikes Back*, Phil Sherburne incorrectly listed Dan as Detroit-based. He's been in Berlin for the last three years. In issue 68, Four Tet's name should be spelled Kieran Hebden. Domino Records's website should be listed as www.domino-recordco.com. In Issue 68 hip-hop reviews, the photo of Pam the Funkstress is by Naomi O'Connell.

BITTER BASTARD

Björk: Homogenized Ilk

At the risk of becoming lifelong bunkmates with Salman Rushdie, the Bastard gladly (but timidly) sticks his neck out by saying this: never has there been a cow more sacred than Björk. The innocent pixie schtick has been wearing thin as of late—last the Bastard checked, Björk was out being violently happy on journalists and making such full-of-love proclamations as "Fuck the Buddhists." Even worse are her fans, blissfully led around by their nose rings to believe that she's not some sell-out marketing machine like Madonna. While they're not the only tyrants of Napoleonic proportions out to conquer the world, both have their little indie (read: vanity) labels safely umbrella'd under AOL Time Warner. And both have "redefined" pop music by reaching for the same jar of henna. For those still left doubting, here's the biggest tidbit: faster than you can cry artistic integrity, Björk penned "Bedtime Stories" and remixed "Impressive Instant" for Madge. Here's some more cud to chew on...

I'm sorry, could you repeat that? Both drop their fairly unpronounceable last names.

Those who don't remember the past... Both shed erstwhile pop roots ("Material Girl"-era Madonna; Sugarcubes-era Björk) for "mature" techno/dance overhaul.

I'll never have to stoop to Winona's level dept. Longtime hangers-on for fashion *enfant terrible*s Jean-Paul Gaultier (Madonna) and Hussein Chalayan (Björk).

Push-button objects. Both share Nellee Hooper, Guy Sigsworth, Marius De Vries and Howie B as producers.

If at first you don't succeed... Both have been remixed by Masters at Work, Massive Attack and Talvin Singh.

Video thrilled the radio star. Both use Stéphane Sednaoui, Jean-Baptiste Mondino and Chris Cunningham for their videos.

If you loved Cats... Madonna plays hero to the working class in the vastly overrated musical *Evita*; her ensuing fracas with director Alan Parker is front-page news. Björk plays working-class hero in the vastly overrated musical *Dancer In the Dark*; her ensuing fracas with director Lars von Trier is front-page news.

Stop Press: Twin Trumps Bastard In Own Magazine. "Björk is like a little girl in a sweets shop: 'Oh I love this, I want this!' Madonna is more brutal: 'These artists are trendy, I can keep myself young and modern if I use them!' Björk's got that tendency as well." *Aphex Twin* in XLR8R #55 (Incidentally, he has turned down both.)

Yanked. Heightened U.S. terrorist fears (Oklahoma) lead to the censoring of Björk's "Army of Me." Heightened U.S. terrorist fears (Iraq) lead to the censoring of Madonna's "American Life."

Foiled again. Videos for both "Pagan Poetry" and "Justify My Love" banned from MTV due to "sexual content."

Yes, but what did People magazine say? Madonna performs at questionable music awards (MTV) wearing infamous wedding outfit. Dress only half as transparent as the marketing tie-in with current album cover for *Like a Virgin*. Björk performs at questionable movie awards (Oscars) wearing infamous swan outfit. Dress only half as transparent as the marketing tie-in with current album cover for *Vespertine*.

Pow! Right in the kisser. Madonna dates notorious hot-headed actor and part-time journalist-sluggo Sean Penn. Björk dates notorious hot-headed musician and part-time journalist-sluggo Tricky.

You my baby daddy? Initially playing up her role as single mother with her first-born (while down-playing the father's identity), Madonna trades New York for London to be with the father of her second child, indie film director Guy Ritchie. Initially playing up her role as a single mother with her first-born (while down-playing the father's identity), Björk trades London for New York to be with the father of her second child, indie film director Matthew Barney.

XLR8R'S MUSIC IS MY LIFE CONTEST

This month we're offering you the opportunity to get your mitts on a variety of noisemakers, from CDs to vinyl to music-production software. UDG has revolutionized the vinyl-transport system, moving away from unwieldy flight cases and chintzy rucksacks with their heavy-duty **Trolley Bag** and **Sling Bag**. The two are precisely the right size to fit in an overhead plane compartment, with padded sides and plenty of extra pockets. Stuffed in these two bags will be copies of the **Tassman 3.1 Sound Synthesis Studio** from **Applied Acoustics**. The Tassman emulates acoustic instruments and analog and FM synthesizers, and has sample manipulation and processing capabilities. Its intuitive interface replicates classic analog hardware, and the software also comes with 50 pre-patched instruments and over 1000 presets. Winners

will also receive the latest music from classic New York house label **King Street**, whose artists appear in this issue's NYC house feature. To win, send us a photo of you making or playing music—DJing, producing, strumming, or just clapping two ass-cheeks together. The funniest and best photos will win.

Two Grand Prize Winners will receive: one UDG DJ bag (with two slipmats and a CD carrying case) filled with a vinyl prize pack of classic releases from King Street and a copy of the Tassman 3.1 software.

Five Runners-Up will receive: A copy of David Morales's *Mix the Vibe* CD on King Street.

Entries will be accepted via mail and email. Send your photos to XLR8R's Music Is My Life contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email them to contest@xlr8r.com. Include your name, return address and email address when you enter. Entries must be received by August 18, 2003.



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AUDIOFILE:
STICKY

SOCIAL CIRCLES' GARAGE STORMER SERVES UP NEW LOW-END THEORIES

While Anglo comic/provocateur Ali G is messing up heads on the Stateside version of *Da Ali G Show* with near-incomprehensible British b-boy absurdism, UK garage's latest mutation—garage rap—is leaving US listeners even more confused. Sure, cats like Dizzee Rascal and Pay As You Go Cartel are catchy in their cracked patois, but what the fuck are they on about?

Fortunately, at least one producer renders the accent barrier moot. Sticky—known to his mum as Richard Forbes—is turning out deep, collarbone-breaking, lung-puncturing beats so damn tough that fussing over the lyrics would be like correcting the executioner's grammar on your way to the gallows.

Sticky is the in-house producer at Social Circles, the South London garage label that's holding back the competition on the strength of singles like Stush's "Dollar Sign," The Surgery's "More Weed," and Tubby T's "Ganjaman" and "Tales from the Hood." While the former hip-hop and R&B producer's style ranges from ragga to 4-beat, his trademark is his bass—a low-end so heavy it's practically apocalyptic. On the soca-beat anthem "Booo!," it's not so much an instrument as a force all its own, as though bass had decided to beat gravity at its own game.

Still, Sticky knows how to listen to his singers. As an instrumental, "Booo!" would've been merely genius, but the ragga-flavored slab of bouncement bombast was elevated to the plane of the supernatural thanks to Ms. Dynamite's double-edged chat. It's a testament to Sticky's skills that Dynamite—whom he spent three months trying to coax away from the university and into the studio—actually recorded her vocals over a different track entirely. "I thought I'd just carve it up and see what I could do with it," says Sticky. "But then I heard it and realized I couldn't cut anything up, because of the way it all gelled." Instead, he wrote a rhythm to interlock with her flow—a weird, mutating 8-bar figure that shadowed her structure, all chorus and no verse.

"Hence the name Sticky," he says, laughing. "I listen to a song, and I follow it. Back in the day that's what a band was. Today, there's more emphasis on just beats, but I want to change that." He's well on his way: Donaeo's "My Philosophy (Bounce)" rides a bass line so springy, the jiggy sing-a-long could easily find itself slotted between Timbaland and the Neptunes on US airwaves. Why not? After all, says Sticky, "We are heavily influenced by US music, and now we've found a way of making music that complements how we talk." }

www.socialcirclesmusic.com



Left: Wangchi Mutu *Yo'mama* (Drawing; 2002-3)
 Below: Barleky Hendricks *Fela, Amen, Amen, Amen* (Oil and variegated leaf on canvas; 2002)
 Images courtesy of *Black President: The Art and Legacy of Fela Anikulapo Kuti*, New Museum of Contemporary Art

AFR(ICON)

As a cultural icon, Nigerian musician **Fela Anikulapo Kuti** has Madonna beat in terms of his power, his influence on other

artists, and his ability to stir up controversy. By the time Kuti died in 1997, he had become a revolutionary symbol and the voice of a new African music; his renegade personal proclivities—including smoking copious amounts of weed and wedding 27 women—didn't stop his music from infiltrating Africa's airwaves like a pre-punk call to arms for the continent's youth. Celebrating Kuti's life, art and Afrobeat sounds—which have inspired artists from Brian Eno to 4hero—*Black President* opens July 11 at Brooklyn's New Museum. The show features work from 26 artists and friends of Fela, predominately of African descent, who cast a prism-like look at Kuti through media including paint, film, video and even computer animation. *Vivian Host*

www.newmuseum.org



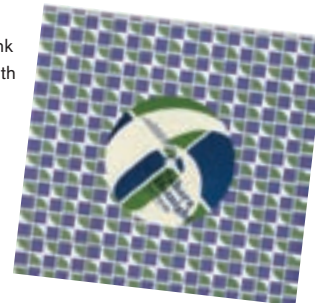
ZINE SPOTLIGHT

GRIN AND BEAR IT

Stop Smiling (US \$4.95) is like your cool older best friend who listens to obscure '70s disco bands, collects underground comics and reads foreign language newspapers, but doesn't have a stick up his ass; the kind of guy who can explain political conflict to you in the same unpretentious tone he uses to discuss the new Bright Eyes record. Friends that cool are pretty hard to come by, which is why this Chicago-produced zine comes in real handy. A recent issue included interviews

with the stars of *Mr. Show*, author Nick Tosches, and 24-year-old punk politician Jason Farbman, along with book and CD reviews that chose quality over quantity, devoting ample space to dissecting both the new Jeffrey Eugenides novel and the latest record by Godspeed You! Black Emperor. Adding to the "fresher than thou" factor, each issue of this glossy temptress comes with a slab of limited-edition vinyl from the likes of Clinic and Sahara Hotnights. *Buck Ditkiss*

www.darla.com



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Clockwise from top left: Kenny Larkin, Kevin Saunderson and Juan Atkins; Norma Jean Bell; Dabrye; a miniature local player. Ayro; Carl Craig with the Detroit Experiment. Photos by Mike Battaglia

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

The names may have changed, but the song remained relatively the same for Detroit's fourth-annual electronic music festival, a three-day free outdoor event held Memorial Day Weekend.

Following the city's decision not to renew the contract of controversial promoter Carol Marvin, the festival formerly known as DEMF was renamed **Movement** this year by new organizer Derrick May. The festival seemed to have more of a carefree, joyous air this year and a big chunk of credit has to go to May, who paid out of his own pocket to ensure it all went on as scheduled.

Sporting the most Detroit-heavy lineup yet, part of the positive energy came from knowing the performers—who all played for free—were there for the love of Detroit techno. Carl Craig made a subdued, yet highly anticipated return to the festival, performing with his live jazz band, the Detroit Experiment. The

group was one of several acts that incorporated live instrumentation; others included Niko Mark's Cosmology, Amp Fiddler, Time: Space, Peven Everett, John Beltran, Ayro, Dwele, Norma Jean Bell, Reese Project and reunited influential '80s groups ESG and Liquid Liquid.

As usual, there were plenty of impressive electronic offerings, including absorbing yet penetrating minimal techno sets from DJ Magda, Akufen and Matthew Dear; groovy soul and funk from Spacek, Three Chairs (featuring Kenny Dixon Jr., a.k.a. Moodymann), Rich Medina and Vikter Duplaix; hand-raising house and techno from Juan Atkins, DJ Rolando and Dan Bell; and lots more eclectic sounds from Midwest Product, Dabrye, Slum Village, and Pole, whose set with rapper Fat Jon was scorching.

Highlights included François K, who played an emotionally uplifting three-hour DJ set (largely on Final Scratch) of soulful house and techno; Stacey Pullen, who threw down a furious mix of thumping techno; and Jeff Mills, who closed the festival Monday night on the main stage with a fun, upbeat blend of hip-hop, hard techno and R&B. As May was often heard saying, "Wait 'til next year." Will do. *Tim Pratt*

BOOK SPOTLIGHT



RAPPER'S DELIGHT Edited by Oakland-ensconced music connoisseur Oliver "O-Dub" Wang, *Classic Material: The Hip-Hop Album Guide* (softcover; US \$15.95, ECW Press) includes discourses about 60 crucial releases from many of music's finest scribes and essayists. With a cathartic foreword by producer/Tommy Boy A&R sage Dante Ross, the anthology could simply serve as a guide to must-have rap releases. However, due to the painstaking selection of contributors by Wang, the book is a "must read" on its own, whether you feel compelled to plug holes in your album collection or not. The volume's passages glitter with gems of awakening, inspiration

and observation regarding hip-hop's astounding range, from trenchant social commentary to frat-boy antics. Inside, hip-hop frees the minds and gooses the booties of wordsmiths like *Rough Guide to Hip-Hop* editor Peter Shapiro, *Rap Attack* author David Toop, *Vibe* correspondent Serena Kim, freelance maven Joseph "Jazzbo" Patel, and more notable critics from *Spin*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Source*, *XXL*, and on and on. *Stacy Meyn*

www.ecwpress.com www.o-dub.com

IN THE FUTURE: ILS



People will probably have barcodes on them. Like the barcode on your passport. I could see people putting them on their wrists and walking through customs. But I wouldn't want to do it.



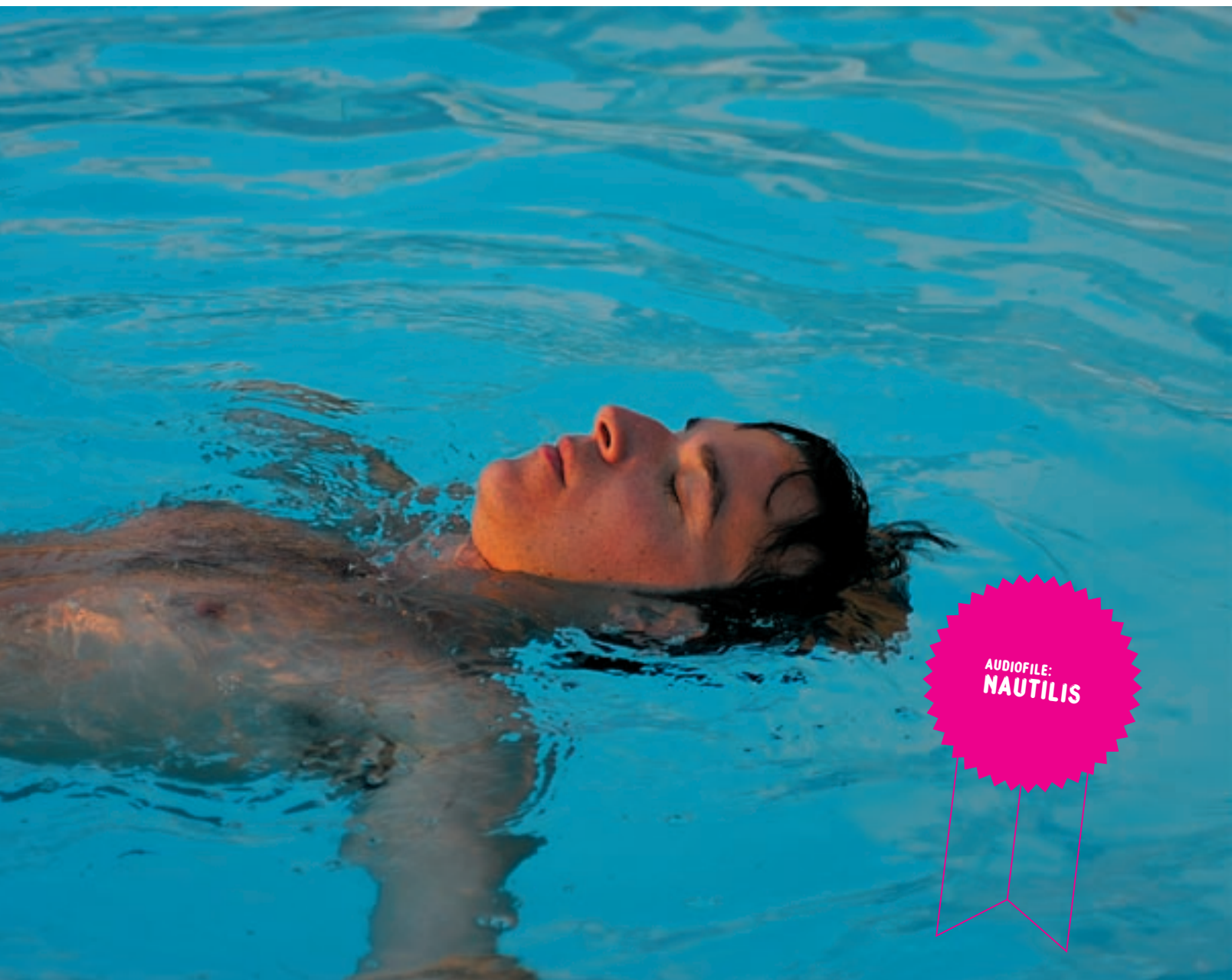
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**AUDIOFILE:
NAUTILIS**

AUSTIN'S GLITCH-HOP STAR TAKES IT EASY.

You can tell a lot about a producer just looking at his shoes.

"I like cool-lookin' shoes, but I just wanna be comfortable," says 25-year-old Skyler McGlothlin, perched on his porch step with a cheap Mexican beer, sporting shorts and a pair of sensible flip-flops.

Not unusual for an Austinite once summer hits, but maybe surprising for a guy known to "one small group of eclectic people, mainly in Europe" as Nautilus. And whatever prestige comes with that renown, it doesn't make him too proud to moonlight as a waiter at Joe's Crab Shack.

Skyler moved to Austin last year after graduating from the University of North Texas, 40 miles north of Dallas in Denton. It was there that he produced the tracks that

became two full-length albums for Planet Mu, *Sketches* and *Are You an Axolotl?*. "Both towns are great," he says, "because you can live for pretty cheap and not work all the time, so you have time to do what you wanna do."

Reflective of Stateside IDM's increasingly street-level populism, you've got a better chance of catching Nautilus hanging at a spliffy hip-hop show or beer-stained pool hall than in the ambitious tangles of "some trendster/scenester IDM crowd." "I'd rather just sit and talk with people and drink and bullshit than sit and stare, especially at electronic music," he remarks.

His creative process is just as low-key. "I'm definitely not intelligent enough to sit back and say 'Okay, this is what I'm gonna do,' and do it for a whole year and plan all the tracks ahead of time and work on that whole album for a year with notes telling me

what to do next," he says. "Nothing works that way with me." Take the sweetly dramatic and happily neurotic glitch-hop songs that became *Are You an Axolotl?*. "It's just me messin' around until I come up with something I like," he explains.

These days, he's messin' around with more of his own rap vox—smoother and not as belligerent as the stylings on "Axolotl." Nautilus's latest direction is less math and more liberal arts, focused on the jazz-funk end of a "gritty instrumental hip-hop tip." You might call it a musical display of effortless style, a lenient jazzitude that's easy like a flip-flop morning.

"I don't really care what people need to hear for this next album," he says. "It's just what I want to do."

www.nautilus.net
www.planet-mu.com

Sound In Motion
James Zabiela

Available at: hooj.com
Out: 07.14.03 | 2xCD / 3x12"

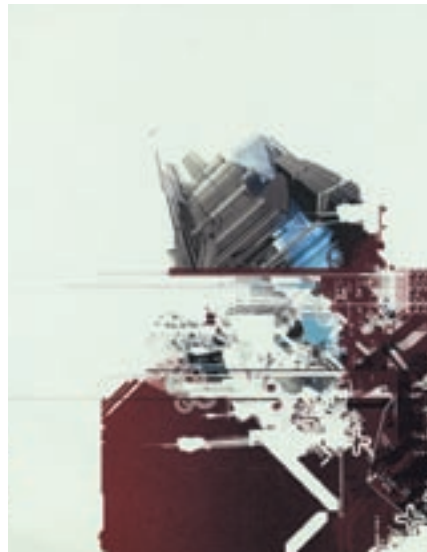
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Left to right: Praystation, WeWorkForThem, Yann Orhan

US AND THEM

The **YouWorkForThem** arm of Baltimore's octopus-like creative agency WeWorkForThem—which has created everything from Dieselboy record sleeves to typefaces for *Wired* to graphic design for ESPN—is devoted to releasing cutting-edge art and design on an unsuspecting public. **Arba** is their latest project (\$7; available through the website), a series of four 5.5" x 7" prints by YWFT collaborators that can serve as tiny morsels of inspiration to hang on your bare studio walls or just be collected like high-end baseball cards. NYC's textural graphic

design wonder Praystation serves up a space-age take on traditional Japanese cherry blossoms, Normal Natural sketches out a dreamlike knight skewering a man on his knife point, Parisian Yann Orhan delivers organic glitch, and WeWorkForThem concentrates on the layered machine trauma that has become their trademark. Also out this month is *One*, a book/CD-ROM project that details the crew's processes and significant projects over the last four years. *Vivian Host*
www.youworkforthem.com

TENDERIZERS "I guess they had the appointment scheduled before I went to sleep. The secretary called my name and I went in to meet with the supreme Fury," says **Tender Fury's** creator Casey McGonagle, recounting the interview process for a job he doesn't recall signing on for. "He basically told me that he was the head of a race of creatures that needed to materialize in the human world in order to take care of some business. He said they had been watching me for a while and that I would be the best man for the job. Then he told me where to go to get the materials."

Don't get it twisted: McGonagle is far from being some reluctant transgalactic Gepetto. His Furies—Franken-stitched together with button eyes, two horns, no mouths (they're "telepathic") and arms long enough for hugging—were created for a higher purpose: "to fight back with love." Hoodies are available, too, suitable for those Furies trying to keep a low profile or brave a never-ending NYC winter. In a variety of colors, it'll be hard not to find one of these mind-reading buggers to match your shoes. *David J Weissberg*
www.tender-fury.com



Zen Sekizawa



Photo: Liend Daily

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HANDS ON DECK

The **PUSH Project** shoves the source of countless grinds, broken bones and road rash into one of the last untouched urban spaces: the art gallery. PUSH's street-ready skate decks—created by SubPop art director Jeff Kleinsmith, photographer C.R. Stecyk and co-curator Nin Truong (whose work is shown here), among others—break from the mass-produced, identity-for-\$50 images that flood today's skate shops. "In the early '80s, when modern skating really started to take off, there was no such thing as skateboarding graphics," curator

Larry Reid recalls. "Now [they've become] cliché." With PUSH, Reid brings individual expression back to deck art, creating nostalgia for large-wheel veterans while entertaining a generation that's grown up on their new-school cousins.

The show's silk-screened decks forsake subtlety for the ollie-grasped image. Bill Gates graces a billion-dollar bill burning viciously from both ends. A hospital-green maggot, walrus-toothed and swollen to the point of bursting, makes a statement about gluttony as it parades across a jet-black background. The most poignant deck is probably Shawn Wolfe's pinpoint-accurate strike on America's suburban mindset. Flanked by a swarm of Apache Attack Helicopters and shotgun-toting housewives, a children's soccer practice takes place beside a banner that reads "In Black Helicopters We Trust." "I used to skate back in the late '70s but I never got to design boards," Wolfe says. "For me, this was a labor of love."

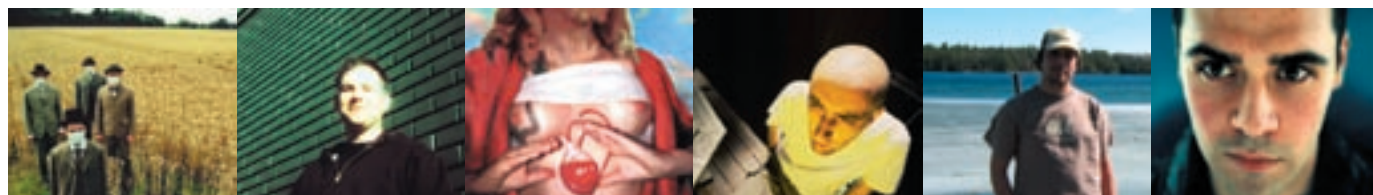
PUSH will run at Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana, CA through August 31 before heading to Williamsburg, Brooklyn's KCDC, and Compound in Portland, OR in the fall. *Justin Paul*

www.roqlarue.com/push.html

www.grandcentralartcenter.com



SPIN CYCLE Good vibrations: **Twilight Circus Dub Soundsystem** have recently collaborated on dub recordings with reggae stars **Big Youth**, **Mykal Rose** and **Luciano**, and are gearing up to release recordings with DJ Spooky, and remixes of **Nirgilis**, **Systemwide** and **Jack Dangers** later this year • Hip-hop label **Day By Day** ramps up the release schedule, with new albums from **MF Grimm**, **Eddie Meek**, **The Nobodies**, and **Lightheaded** • Maple leaf represent: Vancouver's **Nordic Trax** have started up a new Saturday house night at club Sonar and are pumping out new releases from **Jon Delerious** and **Demarkus Lewis**, and repressings of **Josh & Luke** and **JT Donaldson** • Surgically precise electro-rocksters **Clinic** are currently recording their new album in Liverpool • US Music Corp. has come up with new "CDJ" packaging, which embeds a CD inside a 12" sleeve that fits side-by-side with vinyl on the shelves • The Oxford English Dictionary has admitted the term "**bling bling**," coined by rapper BG, into its pages • **Stereolab** members drummer Andy Ramsay and bassist Simon Johns have started a new band, **Europa 51**, and will release their debut on August 8 on Lo Recordings • The ever-ethereal **Broadcast** releases their next full-length August 12 on **Warp Records** • **Belle & Sebastian** look set to trot out a new record by late summer on the **Rough Trade** label • Trance DJ/producer **D:Fuse** has been vociferously protesting the new **Illicit Drug Anti-Proliferation Act** by setting up benefits at different stops on his *People_2* release tour; he is currently trying to convince California promoters Spundae to organize a rally against the Act • **Six Degrees**'s new signing **Cibelle** releases her debut this month, presenting post-bossa nova electronic sounds in Portuguese and English • **Freerange Records** have recently unleashed bangin' new house and broken sounds from **Trevor Loveys** and Belgium's **Only Freak** • And speakin' of freaks: Throbbing Gristle frontman **Genesis P. Orridge** just wrapped up a gallery show at London's A22 Gallery featuring artifacts from his last three decades of madness • **The Latin Alternative Music Conference** will kick off August 14-16 in Los Angeles, featuring performances from **Sidestepper**, **Nortec Collective** and **Los Amigos Invisibles**, among others; other events happen in Toronto and NYC on August 9 • **Kenny Dope** and **Keb Darge** have teamed up to create the **Kay-Dee** label—expect sounds from **Snowboy**, **Quantic** and **Raw Deal**, and re-released material from the **Fantasy** label • Indie bands gettin' ill on the remix: Following on the heels of **The Faint** and **Numbers**, **Bratmobile** and **Dismemberment Plan** plan to release remix albums late summer/early fall, while **Four Tet** reworks **Radiohead** • Sometime LL Cool J-rival **Canibus** has a new album, *Rip the Jacker*, out July 22 on **BabyGrande**. When Cani isn't rapping, he's a cavalry scout/reconnaissance specialist in the US Army • **Lollapalooza** returns with a yawningly predictable line-up, including Incubus, **The Donnas**, **Jane's Addiction** resurrected, **Jurassic 5** and **Pharoah Monche**. Oh Perry, what have you done? • Pop 'n' stuff: July and August see **Astralwerks** churn out new albums such as *Astralwerks Afterhours* and bootleg remixer **Richard X**'s debut, plus a record from alt-rockers **Medicine** that is heavily inspired by **Kid 606** • Play six degrees of separation at www.friendster.com • Listen to **50 Pence**'s "In Da Pub" at www.liamdon.com • The **rave** is now officially over. Please go home.



from left: Clinic, Twilight Circus Dub Soundsystem, Genesis P. Orridge, Jack Dangers, Quantic, Kid606

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DVD PATROL



MEGO-LITH Perhaps, at least for this release, MEGO should change its name to MEGA. Blowing well past the "extended play" and "long play" formats, the Viennese label has packed Farmersmanual's DVD release **RLA** (€23; Mego) with an incredible three days, 21 hours,

38 minutes and three seconds of material. (Numerologists will have a field day trying to interpret those digits—not to mention the DVD's neighbor-of-the-beast catalogue number, 777.) Speaking of interpretation, what exactly are we to make of the contents, which collect every extant scrap—text, audio, and video—documenting the Austrian A/V group's 10-year career? Live recordings unspool in a haze of feedback; clinking glasses and audience-murmur blur into clicks and cuts in a cagey, Cagean nod at found sound, while queasy DV captures the group's every move. Whether you think it's overkill or a geek's wet dream, there's no arguing that *RLA* offers maximum rock *und* roll. *Philip Sherburne*

www.mego.at



SILENT, THEN GOLDEN In 1929, Dziga Vertov set out to capture "the purest possible essence of truth" by showing Soviet audiences what was real instead of the fairy-tale world that cinema had been providing. His truth was the grainy black-and-white silent film *Man with a Movie Camera* (UK £17; Ninja Tune), a day in the life of a Russian city as seen through the camera eye. The sun rises and the camera captures a city awakening: a woman rises out of bed, trams begin to roll along the tracks, and workers set about their tasks as machines also begin to rise and fall rhythmically into place. The Cinematic

Orchestra, who was invited to score the soundtrack to the film and perform it live at the Porto Film Festival in 1999, creates their own sonic truth of melancholy strings, jazzy basslines and warm drum beats which accentuate the movie's different moods. The soundtrack works so well that it's hard to imagine watching the film without it. *Celeste Moure*

www.ninjatune.net



JAM ON IT Originally broadcast on the UK's Channel Four, Chris Morris's *Jam* (UK£19.99; Channel 4 Television) is brutally funny and frequently bewildering. A mother asks a plumber to mend her dead baby ("It's just tubes, really") and a hospital patient is diagnosed with a "symptomless coma"; Minnie Ripperton's "Loving You" is mimed by a woman being spanked with a Space Hopper; and a jilted boyfriend feeds himself into a wood-shred-

der. When a man commits suicide by repeatedly launching himself from a first-floor balcony, a bystander simply recalls, "After about 40 jumps he just didn't get up anymore."

This distorted take on human relationships presents inanity, cruelty and absurd optimism pursued to their apex. Meanwhile, a sticker on the DVD case advises "EXTRAS INCLUDED INSIDE THIS PACKAGE: one crashing airliner, eight tons of geese and a 50ft plutonium bum." *David Hemingway*

www.cookandbombd.co.uk



EIGHT IS ENOUGH Björk will release eight DVDs this summer (all US \$19.98 except *Live Box Set*, US \$39.98; *One Little Indian*) of such astounding quality that fans ought to prepare to declare bankruptcy. Some of the titles include *Inside Björk*, a one-hour documentary featuring commentary from Thom Yorke and the RZA, and *Vessel*, a video of her 1994 *Debut* tour. Of the eight, video collection *Greatest Hits:Volumen 1993/2003* and visual feast *Vespertine: Live at Royal Opera House* show the degree to which the Icelandic singer is not only one of the world's best-

loved pop artists, but also a curator of and collaborator with the best artists of our generation. *Volumen* presents 21 of Björk's haunting and groundbreaking music videos, bite-sized documents that introduced the mainstream to visual artists like Michael Gondry, Spike Jonze, Stéphane Sednaoui and Chris Cunningham. *Live at Royal Opera House* is an exquisitely filmed performance with commentary from Björk that explains the painstaking process behind her work. *Vivian Host*

www.bjork.com



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HOUSE MUSIC INGENUE AND GALLERY LABEL CURATOR SETS UP SHOP IN CHICAGO.

James Thomas Donaldson developed a penchant for house music early, growing up in Dallas, Texas on a diet of DiY parties by night (courtesy of Ian Collingwood, Sean Holland and the Hazy Daze Collectif) and days spent being thrown discs by Luke Sardello at Dallas's collectors haven, Bill's Records. Since then, his self-taught production skills and deft DJing abilities have landed him gigs at the world's best clubs, including his personal favorite, Glasgow's Sub Club.

JT first broke onto the scene as a producer in 1997 via Dallas imprint Fairpark. Since then, he has quietly established himself as one of the States' premier house music makers, serving up stylish solo efforts

for Cyclo, Distance and Aesoteric and rump-shaking remixes for Statra, Classic and Earth. His list of collaborators runs long, and includes projects with Tim Shumaker (2nd Shift), Lance DeSardi (Undercover Agency) and Spencer Kincy (Dialect and Duality).

Twenty-six-year-old Donaldson thrives on change. He plied his trade in Chicago and then Los Angeles before making his latest move back to the Windy City. From his new base in Wicker Park, the soft-spoken-yet-resolute house music icon explains his return to house music's spiritual home. "I've always wanted to set up a label and I thought I should do it from Chicago," Donaldson says. "I also moved for a change of scenery and different surroundings. I felt like I was getting a bit too comfy in LA."

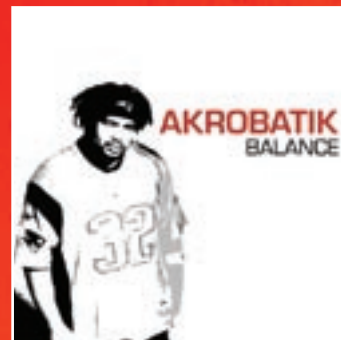
His label, Gallery—co-owned and run with Shumaker—is an "artistic outlet" still in its

infancy, but JT has his sights set on Derrick Carter, Diz and Brett Johnson for future releases. He's also busy juggling a sophomore 2nd Shift album for Seasons, a solo album for Distance, and a healthy DJ schedule, which recently took him to Moscow, Istanbul and Frankfurt. Citing influences as diverse as The Rapture, Wally Badarou, Trent Reznor and David Byrne, Donaldson is keen to push his sound in different directions, possibly even taking on major label work in the future.

Despite partying around the world, JT is still waiting to get his groove on at home. "I haven't experienced a really good party in Chicago since I've been back," he concedes. "The older cats know music inside-out, but they don't go out that often. }

www.gallerymusicgroup.com

**AUDIOFILE:
JT DONALDSON**



AKROBATIK
Balance
Boom bap rap from one of Boston's finest. *Balance* is Akrobatik's debut full-length. Guests include Da Beatminerz, DJ Revolution, Diamond D, Mr. Lif and Fakt5 One.



KEVIN BLECHDOM
Bitches Without Britches
First full length from one half of the duo Blectum From Blechdom. A totally refreshing mixture of computer pop, banjo-song-writing, weird noises, explicit lyrics and a heartbreaking version of Tina Turner's 'Private Dancer.'



DEFARI
Odds & Evens
Likwit Crew MC Defari, brings hip hop fans a West Coast smash with his latest. *Odds & Evens*. The album features songs by The Liks, Dilated Peoples and Phil Da Agony plus production by Evidence, E-Swift & Fred Wreck.

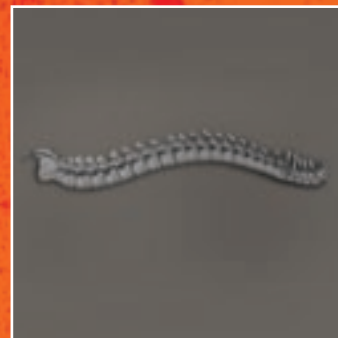


ELECTRONICAT
21st Century Toy
Album by French rising star Fred Bigot aka Electronicat for the German Disko B label. Co-produced by Chicks On Speed producer Gerhard Potuznik. Electronicat previously released for labels like Kompakt, Kitty-Yo and Mute. Remix credits include Depeche Mode's 'Dead Of Night'. "Are you ready for Electric-glam-rock'n'roll?"

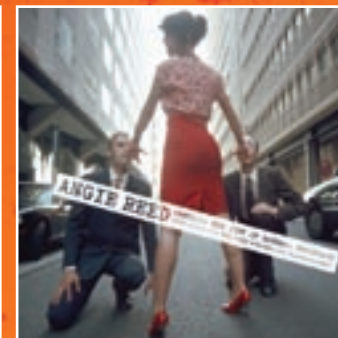
'IT' COMES IN DOZENS.



HOUSE OF FIX
21st Century Fix
The House Of Fix is Jason Leach of Subhead fame. Most brilliantly orchestrated crossover dash of Techno, Rock, Electro, Punk, and Wave. This is RUCKNO! Album Of The Month -Spex Magazine Germany



KILL MEMORY CRASH
When the Blood Turns Black
A relentless debut of IDM and bone-hard Industrial. This is the sound of the machines gone bad.



ANGIE REED
Presents the Best of Barbara Brockhaus
Ex-Stereo Total guitarist with well-observed lyrics & punkish electro-beats. feat. Gonzales, Patric Catani & Bomb 20.



SOUL PURPOSE
Breaking Records
Debut album from Soul Purpose featuring C Rayz Walz, Juggaknots, Pumpkinhead, Percee P and more.

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SWAG
No Such Thing
The long awaited 2nd album from Sheffield based duo Chris Duckenfield & Richard Brown. 15 brand new cuts packed with technicolour snapshots of their unique music in all its acclaimed diversity, moving as it does through raw house grooves to gritty electronic cuts and sublime vocal tracks.



DEEP & SEXY 2
Various Artists
Following the first volume mixed by Francois K, Ron Trent compiles and mixes a selection of choice Wave Music cuts and this time a few added gems from outside labels to complete the package.



WEATHERMEN
Conspiracy Mix CD
Rap's first underground super group has arrived. Featuring the likes of Cage El-p, Cannibal Ox, Tame One, Copywrite, Breezly Brewin and Mhz, the Weathermen come with 20 slamin' tracks. Production by Rjd2, J Zone, Mighty Mi, and more.



YOUNGBLOOD BRASS BAND
Center Level Roar
A masterwork of elevated musicianship, intense lyricism, and true to the spirit of all highly-creative hip hop. Lead single 'Y'all Stay Up' features Talib Kweli.

NEW YORK'S LAPTOP SEX SYMBOL GETS HIS ROCKS OFF.

By day, Jason Forest looks like a mild-mannered computer programmer. By night, he shares a pseudonym with disco's greatest diva, Donna Summer, exuding David Lee Roth's charm and Keith Richards's skill while single-handedly inducting the computer into rock 'n' roll's economy of sex appeal. "We all know how incredibly dull laptop performances are," says Forest. "So I just try to emote the music and push the audience to give back."

Originally from Atlanta, Georgia, where he made a name for himself as a visual artist and critic, Forest moved to New York City a few years ago with the intention of becoming an international art star. But when that dream fizzled out like a Fourth of July sparkler, his rock-star fantasies took hold.

"Electronic music doesn't have the emotional impact it once had," says Forest, referring to, among other things, the enormity of the disco era. "I'm really interested in trying to make music people will cherish; something that's a little warmer, but still electronic."

On his latest record, *This Needs to be Your Style* (Irritant), Forest mixes prog rock melodies with the minimized song structure of German techno, draping the endless glamour of disco with heavy metal's abysmal thrash. Despite a certain artistic conceptuality that lies behind every jam, the bacchic maniac that Forest becomes during his performances instantly assuages any fears that his music sounds "too smart."

Far from dull intellectualism, Forest's jams evoke a straight-up house-party attitude. His shows fill clubs beyond capacity; during a recent European tour, Forest quickly gained notoriety for inciting crowds to stage-dive, scream, grind and get down.

With another full-length and a handful of singles on the way, one can only try to imagine what's next, since—like Axl Rose or the artist formerly known as Prince—Forest pushes himself to the absolute limit. When asked about the direction of his upcoming projects, he supplies a fittingly blasé answer: "I'm not sure, but it seems like me being on fire and rolling around isn't far away."]

www.cockrockdisco.com



AUDIOFILE:
**DONNA
SUMMER**



Left: Donna Summer ignites flames onstage. Above: Jason Forest retires to the garden.



POPPIN' FRESH

San Francisco's legendary skater Cairo Foster might hold down the **Popwar** skate team with the nollie flips and backside tailslides, but it's a Yogi Proctor-designed gap-toothed bunny that blings all over the backside of Popwar's high-design skate decks. Proctor, who also works as Popular Studios, has taken a flying leap away from the rest of the industry's frat boy-inspired designs, producing clean and clever Illustrator magic over brightly-colored decks, t-shirts and wheels. Look out for the company's limited edition Stealth Series, and some damn fine skating from team members Rob Gonzales, Kenny Reed and Chad Timtim. *Vivian Host*
www.popwar.net

How did you come up with the name Popwar and what's the concept behind it?

The name originated out of a sickness of the all-pervasive heavy targeting that bombards everybody in this arena that is popular commercial culture. No groups are left alone. If you have the slightest buying power you are on the list, and if you have absolutely no buying power whatsoever, then chances are you'll be taken out of your context and used to promote fashionable clothing. In certain terms, Popwar is no different—like any sickness, you have to produce the virus to get the antibody. In essence, Popwar embraces the super-structures of the establishment as much as it agrees with the protests of the anti-establishment. We embrace the contradictions that surround us by creating our own language out of them. We are the popular warriors, we are the decoy.

What sets Popwar aside from other skate companies?

Cairo and Timtim's hairstyles. The team uniforms are making a difference, too, but that was Bod Boyle's idea.

What other art and design inspires you?

I like work that links itself to outside concepts, yet can still stand alone: reverse containers. Architecture and typography represent that strongest for me at the moment, as both define a given situation within a random context.

What sort of music puts you in the mood?

Right now, I'm on a bit of a Barry White kick. I never appreciated his stuff until a couple of weeks ago. My favorite label ever is em:t. I like all genres on different occasions—country is the only music that inspires me to change the channel.

At left, Popwar deck designs (from left) "Go Forth and Multiply," "Word Up" and "Love You Longtime."

MARRIED TO THE MOB

according to Christian "Chrischi" Roth, co-founder and acting spokesperson for Germany's **Hessenmob**. Since 1999, Chrischi and partner Michael Neuss have been putting out quality skateboards with a sharp eye for the art attached to them. The pair possesses an entrepreneurial spirit that is more in line with, say, Leo Castelli than Tony Hawk. Hessenmob is not without its riders, but Laif Draasch, Danny Sommerfeld and Sascha Müller (to name but a few) have graphic artists like Evan Hecox, Nago, Kid Acne, Kinsey and Shepard Fairey all comfortably underfoot. We interrupted Chrischi's busy schedule (he's also a full-time photographer and filmmaker) to get the lowdown on being a Mobster. *David J Weissberg*
www.hessenmob.de

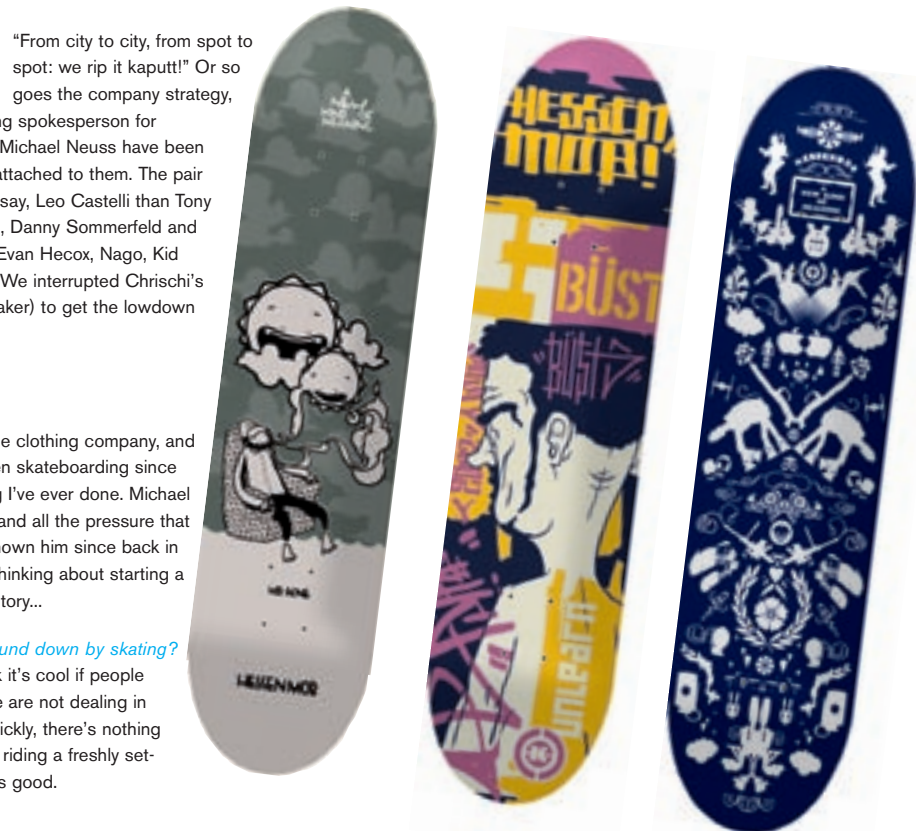
What was the decision to start Hessenmob?

Things just fell into place. I was getting tired of doing my little clothing company, and I wasn't excited about just doing photography work. I've been skateboarding since 1985, and the whole scene was very influential in everything I've ever done. Michael had a café for a while, but didn't like to deal with old ladies and all the pressure that comes with running a store with a lot of employees. I had known him since back in the day from skateboarding, and when I heard that he was thinking about starting a skateboard company, we got together. Everything else is history...

Do you get sad when you see one of your nice boards ground down by skating?

No. We make skateboards for the purpose of skating. I think it's cool if people want to put our decks on their bedroom wall instead, but we are not dealing in art, really. To me, even though graphics get scratched off quickly, there's nothing better than the personal psychological kick that comes from riding a freshly set-up board for the first time and knowing for a fact that it looks good.

At right, Hessenmob deck designs by (from left) Kid Acne, Kinsey and Nago.



NYC'S FREESTYLE BATTLE CHAMPION SPELLS IT OUT.

Freestyling is the art of rapping off the top of your head, creating split-second verses on any given topic and making them rhyme. Freestyle battles pit the best MCs against each other in a war of lyrical supremacy. Although movies like *8 Mile* and mainstream cultural outlets like MTV have brought the phenomenon of battle raps to the suburbs of America, the art form is old news to most hip-hop vets. "For me, it's nothing new," says MC Supernatural. "Battling has been in hip-hop since hip-hop began. *8 Mile* didn't set that off, Eminem didn't start that off!"

Supernatural grew up in Marion, Indiana but later moved to New York City, where he first got noticed in the rap community for his freestyles on Stretch and Bobbito's groundbreaking hip-hop radio show in the early '90s. But what really put Supernat on the map was the historic New Music Seminar battle against Craig G, and his victory over rapper Juice at the Wake-Up Show Anniversary battle. Despite cries of a fix, Supernatural went on to open for Wu-Tang Clan and later wowed audiences across the land supporting Jurassic 5 on the Word of Mouth Tour. He proved his victory was no fluke by letting the crowd pick topics and then flawlessly flowing about whatever they chose using myriad voices and personalities. Now, after getting dropped from a

major and watching his LP fail to make it to the stores, Supernatural is releasing *The Lost Freestyles* on indie imprint Babygrande. The record is a combination of the historic battle moments and live performances that cemented his fame, along with some new studio tracks.

When asked about the best battle emcees out there today, Supernat doesn't hesitate. "I'm the best battle emcee that's around today," he states. But he also gives it up for his rivals: "Juice is a good battle emcee, I give credit where credit is due. Eminem is, definitely, and Eyedea. Those are the cats still doing it." You probably won't catch Supernatural battling it out on the street corner these days. He's opening for Linkin Park, and has visions of pay-per-view specials and championship bouts at the MGM Grand in his head. "Me? I battle on a whole different level at this point," he declares. "No need for me to play in the sandbox no more." www.babygrande.com



BOOK SPOTLIGHT



ICELAND, UNCOVERED Often perceived as a desolate landscape of glaciers, volcanoes, lava fields and snow-capped mountains, the homeland of artists like Gus Gus, Múm, and the Sugarcubes has gradually become known as a top destination for the hip under-25 set. Set principally in the capital of Reykjavik, *Waking Up In Iceland* (softcover; US \$13.95, Sanctuary Publishing) provides an in-depth look at Iceland's underground music scene, as well as its history, culture and artistic traditions. While there is definitely ample advice on where to stay, what to eat and how to get around, author (and *XLR8R* contributor) Paul Sullivan mainly cooks up an impressive guidebook that provides just the right mix of adventure and information. Capturing the spirit of the people, the land and the music scene with confidence, Sullivan literally guides the reader through a mysterious landscape dotted with folk heroes, pop stars, eclectic musicians, poets and the ever-present influence of the landscape and ancient culture. Travelers will appreciate the detailed lowdown on bars and nightclubs, while armchair tourists and those interested in tracing the roots of Iceland's original and often leftfield approach to music will be equally satisfied. *Chris Muniz*

INFLUENCES: RICHARD X

Under the Girls On Top moniker, producer Richard X spliced together acappellas and instrumentals—TLC/The Human League, Missy Elliott/The Normal and Adina Howard/Gary Numan—to spawn the most covetable of last year's "bootleg" releases. The latter track was given a legitimate release, with Howard's vocal re-recorded by

The Sugababes to produce a UK chart-topping single, "Freak Like Me." X's forthcoming debut album features collaborations with Jarvis Cocker, Tiga and Liberty X, the losing, but occasionally ace, finalists from the UK's *Popstars* TV show. The latter re-interpret Chaka Khan's "Ain't Nobody" over a mutated version of Human League's "Being Boiled" to create a track that inches perilously close to genius. *David Hemingway*

Rich X on Human League

"I was a kid out of time. I first heard Human League's 'Circus of Death'—the flip of 'Being Boiled'—in the mid-'80s. For some reason it stuck in my mind more than the A-side, although that later overtook it in my affections. I remember asking to hear a secondhand copy in a record shop after reading about it in a magazine—seeing as I already had a couple of old keyboards, I thought I would like it. As youngsters do, I then went mad and bought as much stuff by them as paper-round money would allow. There was lots you could get your teeth into. I loved the strangeness of it all, especially how it seemed more futuristic than the music around at the time, which was a lot of overproduced ballads. I love the first two albums, *Reproduction* and *Travelogue*—the sounds, the ideas, everything. They were exciting and weird. I can't believe they are so old now—they still inspire me today. I deliberately tried to reproduce the sounds they made with cheap synths in the '80s and still try and copy them now. 'Being Boiled' is integral to my way of musical thinking. I think it bears a large resemblance to modern R&B."



Left: Human League, Below: Richard X



JUMP START THE NIGHT



Frank Dommert

AUDIOFILE:
SONIG LABEL

ECLECTIC SOUNDS CALL MOUSE ON MARS'S ESOTERIC IMPRINT HOME.

Sometimes the most wonderful and unusual things result from the most prosaic of reasons. Case in point: the founding of Sonig in 1997. Mouse on Mars's Jan St. Werner and Andi Toma started the label to solve a rather mundane problem. After parting ways with the UK imprint Too Pure, the pair was licensing their records to a hodge-podge of labels around the globe. The group needed a central place to release their music, and starting their own imprint seemed the obvious remedy.

Sonig quickly became much more than a Mouse on Mars vanity project. St. Werner, Toma, and DJ and Entenphuhl label head Frank Dommert quickly fashioned the label into a representation of their diverse musical

tastes and a home for similarly idiosyncratic musicians.

Sonig's inaugural release was the lovely *Instrumentals*, an album of previously unreleased Mouse on Mars tracks that, in typical Sonig fashion, seemed at home nowhere else. Soon, the label began to publish records by an increasingly eccentric assortment of musicians, who, as St. Werner puts it, "didn't fit where they were." To call Sonig's roster of artists eclectic is a profound understatement—you'd never mistake C-Schulz & Hajsch's abstract electro-acoustic music for Schlammpeitziger's lo-fi electronic pop; or Vert's off-kilter minimalist grooves for Workshop's skewed teutonic folk; or Scratch Pet Land's avant playtronics for, well, *anything else on Earth*.

"Sonig is about content and not a design or an aesthetic," St. Werner says. "It's very much about detail and complexity. On every

record that we've put out, the artists went as far as they could go with what they wanted to do. [Each record] has real personality. This is what we want. It's not a replaceable kind of attitude thing, or design thing, or hip thing." Indeed, every Sonig release defies expectation and easy categorization. The tracks are unique hybrids, full of quirks, fits and starts—neither electronic nor organic, neither experimental nor pop.

"Every one of (our artists) has their own obsession, their own strong idea of how music can be made, and their own specific ways of making music," St. Werner proclaims, adding with considerable pride, "It really makes me happy that this bunch of people is so unique and uncombinable. It makes me happy that such a label exists."

www.sonig.de



Doc Martin – Fabric 10 (Fabric)

Doc does it live: three decks, a mixer and no computerized training wheels. Expect a truly eclectic mix ranging from deep, disco laden grooves to twisted, peak time floor fillers. A serious mix for the serious house head.



Emo – This Is My Home (Stereo Deluxe)

Whether Emo is in the groove of minimal soul like D'Angelo or in the dubswing thing like Lee Perry, *This is my Home* captivates the listener with every track. Features collaborations with Boozoo Bajou, Les Gammas and Daddy Ous from Nu Spirit Helsinki.



Moodyman – Silence in the Secret Garden (Peacefrog)

Silence in the Secret Garden is an intensely personal and spiritual journey to the heart and soul of black music. This album once again confirms Moodyman's place as one of the world's premier dance producers.



Scratch Perverts – Badmeaningood (Ultimate Dilemma)

Badmeaningood gives hip hop's free spirits the chance to showcase the music they feel best sums up what it's all about. This time out, celebrated turntablist crew Scratch Perverts provide a mix chock full of heavyweight tunes blended with subtle but masterful scratching.



DJ Hyper – Bedrock Breaks: Fractured (Bedrock / Hyper)

Hyper drops the best breaks tracks of today, yesterday and most importantly, tomorrow. Features exclusive, rare, and remixed tracks from Oakenfold, Timo Maas, WestBam, Terminalhead, Meat Katie and more.



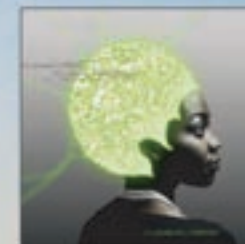
Fabio – Fabric Live 10 (Fabric)

Is Fabio the man responsible for breaking Drum n Bass in the UK? Possibly. Is he one of the genre's most gifted early pioneers? Definitely! Take a trip with one of Drum n Bass's most revered hero. Multi-faced and party based!



Krust & Die – I Kamanchi (Full Cycle)

Fresh of the success of Roni Size's solo debut, *Touching Down*, Full Cycle unleashes another monster, *I Kamanchi*, by Roni's Repraent bandmembers Krust & Die. *I Kamanchi* bears witness to the musical kung-fu that the Full Cycle camp have in spades.



Megablast – Creation (Stereo Deluxe)

Genre-defying 21st century two-step dubtronics topped off with soulful vocals from the likes of Hubert Tubbs from Tower of Power and Sugar B of Kruder & Dorfmeister fame.



photo: Doug Smiley

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Whenimondamic hip-hop

SEPARATELY, RULE-BREAKING
PREFUSE 73 ARE IMPLOD
INSIDE AND REACHING FANS
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU
RENEGADES TOG

PRODUCERS MADLIB AND
ING HIP-HOP FROM THE
IN OTHER GALAXIES.
BRING THESE TWO SONIC
ETHER TO CHAT?

"SAME OLD BULLSHIT.
I WISH SOME CATS WOULD DO
SOME GOOD INTERVIEWS!"

"I'M NEVER GOING TO
ANSWER THE PHONE
AGAIN!"

Two producers. Two sounds. One conversation. What happens when you bring two top artists together for the first time to talk about their work? *XLR8R* wanted to find out. One weekend in May, we linked up a couple of this era's production radicals to speak to each other and us about their lives in music.

TEXT DJ ANNA
IMAGES CHRISTOPHER WOODCOCK

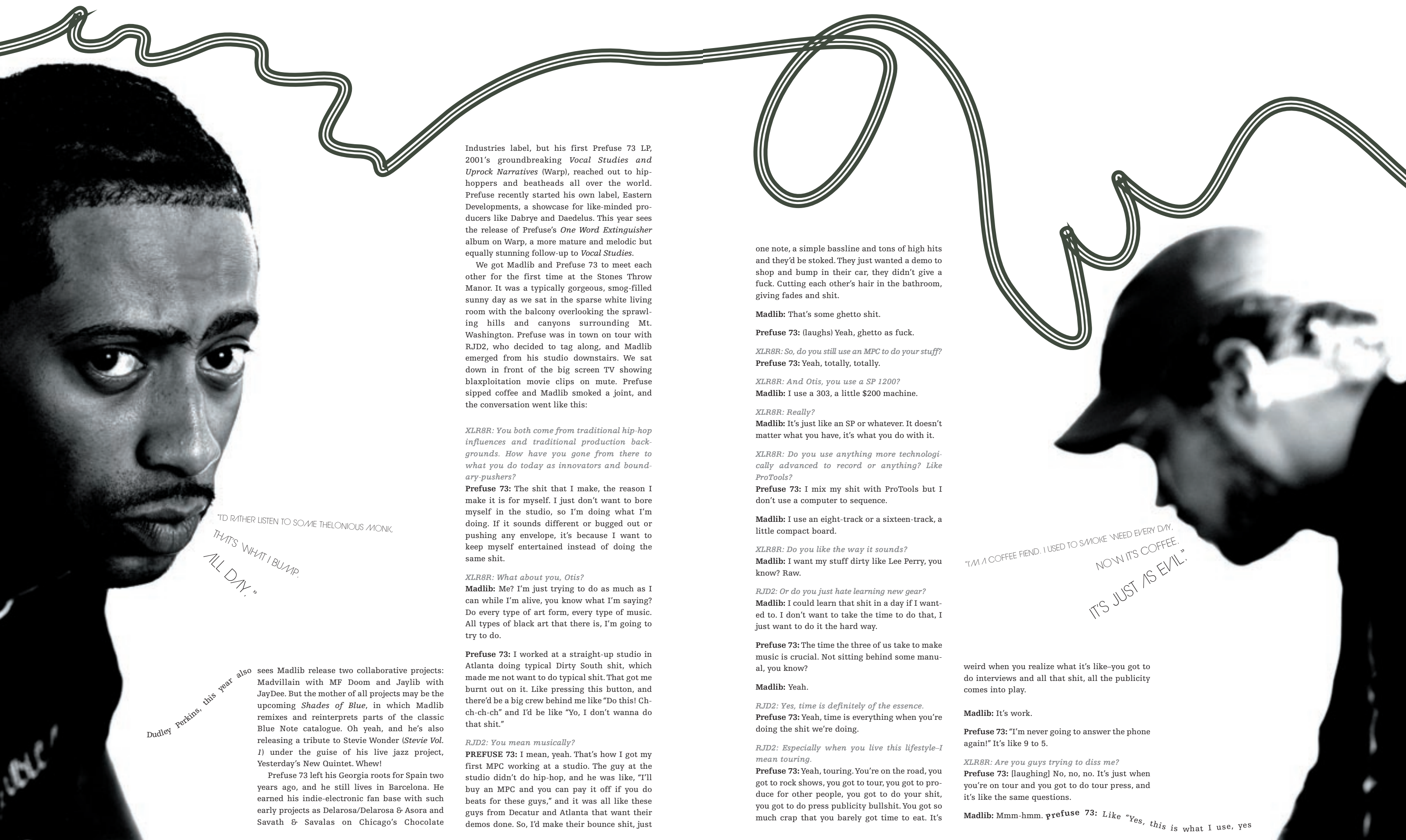
Madlib (known to his close homies as Otis Jackson Jr.) and Prefuse 73 (the main production alias of soft-spoken Scott Herren) are changing the sound of hip-hop

by pushing the boundaries of modern production. Between Prefuse's trademark staccato push-button edit style and Madlib's dubbed-out jazz loops and dirty drums, these cats are revolutionizing sampled music with each new project.

Madlib grew up in Oxnard, CA, and he still lives nearby in LA's Mt. Washington district at the Stones Throw house, along with label owner and founder Chris "Peanutbutter Wolf" Manak, label manager Eothen "Egon" Alapatt and resident designer Jeff Jank (can someone film a

reality show of that place, please?). Madlib came to prominence in the late '90s with his group Lootpack, as he and cohort Wildchild produced such Cali classics as "Whenimondamic" from their classic album *Soundpieces: Da Antidote*, and guested on Tha Alkaholiks's "WLIX." In 2000 he released Quasimoto's *Unseen*, a bedroom project destined to be a classic. Quas is a high-voiced creature with a taste for jazz, weed and resorting to violence when necessary. The raps were ridiculous, the beats sublime. In addition to production credits on albums by labelmates Wildchild and

In addition to production credits on albums by labelmates Wildchild and



"I'D RATHER LISTEN TO SOME THELONIOUS MONK.
THAT'S WHAT I BUMP.
ALL DAY."

Dudley Perkins, this year also sees Madlib release two collaborative projects: Madvillain with MF Doom and Jaylib with JayDee. But the mother of all projects may be the upcoming *Shades of Blue*, in which Madlib remixes and reinterprets parts of the classic Blue Note catalogue. Oh yeah, and he's also releasing a tribute to Stevie Wonder (*Stevie Vol. 1*) under the guise of his live jazz project, Yesterday's New Quintet. Whew!

Prefuse 73 left his Georgia roots for Spain two years ago, and he still lives in Barcelona. He earned his indie-electronic fan base with such early projects as Delarosa/Delarosa & Asora and Savath & Savalas on Chicago's Chocolate

Industries label, but his first Prefuse 73 LP, 2001's groundbreaking *Vocal Studies and Uprock Narratives* (Warp), reached out to hip-hopsters and beatheads all over the world. Prefuse recently started his own label, Eastern Developments, a showcase for like-minded producers like Dabrye and Daedelus. This year sees the release of Prefuse's *One Word Extinguisher* album on Warp, a more mature and melodic but equally stunning follow-up to *Vocal Studies*.

We got Madlib and Prefuse 73 to meet each other for the first time at the Stones Throw Manor. It was a typically gorgeous, smog-filled sunny day as we sat in the sparse white living room with the balcony overlooking the sprawling hills and canyons surrounding Mt. Washington. Prefuse was in town on tour with RJD2, who decided to tag along, and Madlib emerged from his studio downstairs. We sat down in front of the big screen TV showing blaxploitation movie clips on mute. Prefuse sipped coffee and Madlib smoked a joint, and the conversation went like this:

XLR8R: You both come from traditional hip-hop influences and traditional production backgrounds. How have you gone from there to what you do today as innovators and boundary-pushers?

Prefuse 73: The shit that I make, the reason I make it is for myself. I just don't want to bore myself in the studio, so I'm doing what I'm doing. If it sounds different or bugged out or pushing any envelope, it's because I want to keep myself entertained instead of doing the same shit.

XLR8R: What about you, Otis?

Madlib: Me? I'm just trying to do as much as I can while I'm alive, you know what I'm saying? Do every type of art form, every type of music. All types of black art that there is, I'm going to try to do.

Prefuse 73: I worked at a straight-up studio in Atlanta doing typical Dirty South shit, which made me not want to do typical shit. That got me burnt out on it. Like pressing this button, and there'd be a big crew behind me like "Do this! Ch-ch-ch-ch" and I'd be like "Yo, I don't wanna do that shit."

RJD2: You mean musically?

PREFUSE 73: I mean, yeah. That's how I got my first MPC working at a studio. The guy at the studio didn't do hip-hop, and he was like, "I'll buy an MPC and you can pay it off if you do beats for these guys," and it was all like these guys from Decatur and Atlanta that want their demos done. So, I'd make their bounce shit, just

one note, a simple bassline and tons of high hits and they'd be stoked. They just wanted a demo to shop and bump in their car, they didn't give a fuck. Cutting each other's hair in the bathroom, giving fades and shit.

Madlib: That's some ghetto shit.

Prefuse 73: (laughs) Yeah, ghetto as fuck.

XLR8R: So, do you still use an MPC to do your stuff?

Prefuse 73: Yeah, totally, totally.

XLR8R: And Otis, you use a SP 1200?

Madlib: I use a 303, a little \$200 machine.

XLR8R: Really?

Madlib: It's just like an SP or whatever. It doesn't matter what you have, it's what you do with it.

XLR8R: Do you use anything more technologically advanced to record or anything? Like ProTools?

Prefuse 73: I mix my shit with ProTools but I don't use a computer to sequence.

Madlib: I use an eight-track or a sixteen-track, a little compact board.

XLR8R: Do you like the way it sounds?

Madlib: I want my stuff dirty like Lee Perry, you know? Raw.

RJD2: Or do you just hate learning new gear?

Madlib: I could learn that shit in a day if I wanted to. I don't want to take the time to do that, I just want to do it the hard way.

Prefuse 73: The time the three of us take to make music is crucial. Not sitting behind some manual, you know?

Madlib: Yeah.

RJD2: Yes, time is definitely of the essence.

Prefuse 73: Yeah, time is everything when you're doing the shit we're doing.

RJD2: Especially when you live this lifestyle—I mean touring.

Prefuse 73: Yeah, touring. You're on the road, you got to rock shows, you got to tour, you got to produce for other people, you got to do your shit, you got to do press publicity bullshit. You got so much crap that you barely got time to eat. It's

"I'M A COFFEE FIEND. I USED TO SMOKE 'NEED EVERY DAY.
NOW IT'S COFFEE.
IT'S JUST AS EVIL."

weird when you realize what it's like—you got to do interviews and all that shit, all the publicity comes into play.

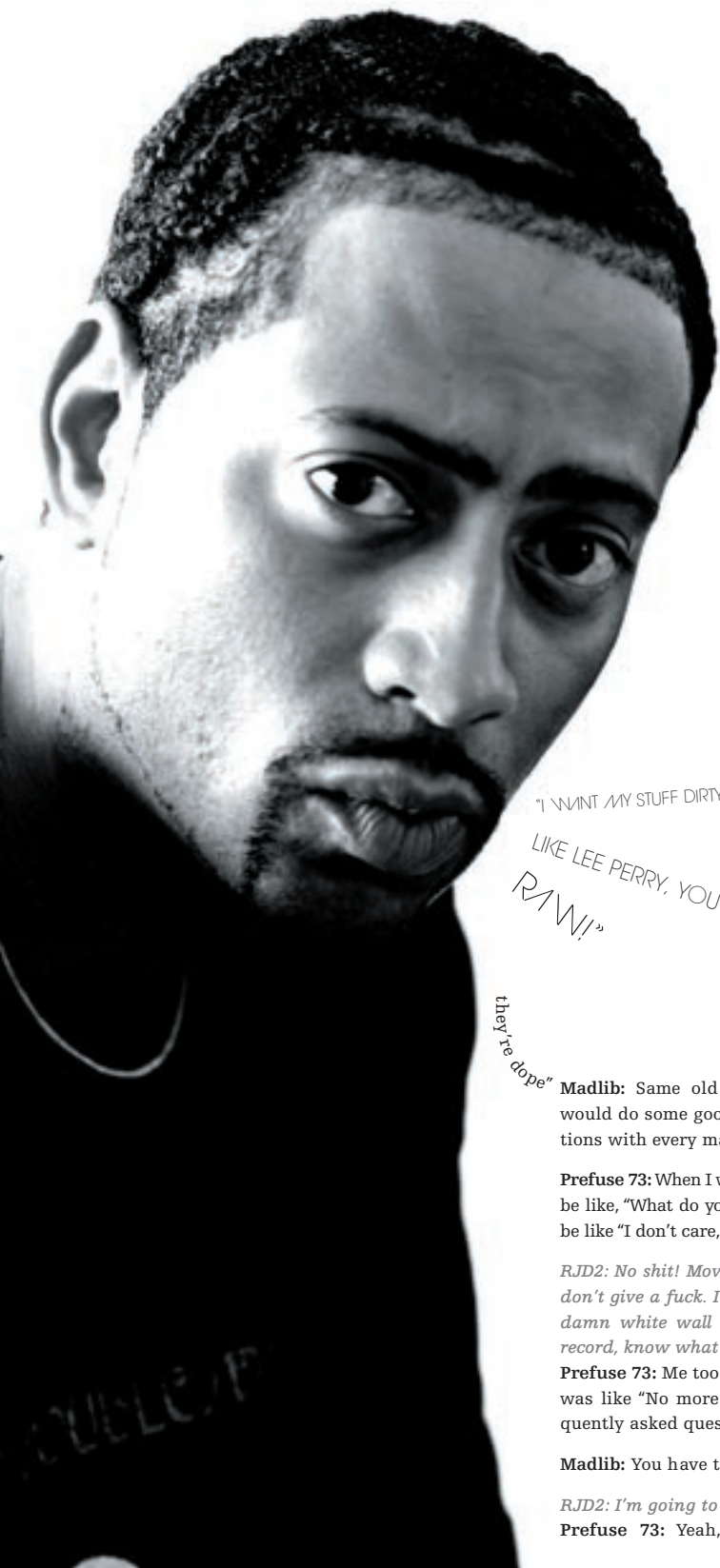
Madlib: It's work.

Prefuse 73: "I'm never going to answer the phone again!" It's like 9 to 5.

XLR8R: Are you guys trying to diss me?

Prefuse 73: [laughing] No, no, no. It's just when you're on tour and you got to do tour press, and it's like the same questions.

Madlib: Mmm-hmm. **prefuse 73:** Like "Yes, this is what I use, yes



"I WANT MY STUFF DIRTY
LIKE LEE PERRY, YOU KNOW?
RAW!"

they're dope"

Anna, here we go!

RJD2: Yeah, so Anna, what's so great about being an interviewer?

XLR8R: Well, let me tell it like this. . .No, seriously, here's a question that's not musically related—well, not exactly....

Prefuse 73: [laughing] Okay.

XLR8R: What inspires you in your day-to-day life?

Madlib: Being alive. Good trees...family and friends.

Prefuse 73: I say people. Mostly always people.

Madlib: Friends. And enemies.

Prefuse 73: True. Mine goes back to people. Anything I make, I'm always thinking of a person.

Madlib: Yeah, an alien. Other beings.

XLR8R: Otherworldly beings?

Madlib: Yeah, other worlds.

XLR8R: Do you think smoking weed influences your work?

Madlib: Nah, I'd be the same regardless. It's just something I like to do. Wake up, go out, go to sleep—it's just like eating.

Prefuse 73: Yeah, I'm a coffee fiend. I used to smoke weed every day, now it's coffee. It's just as evil. Coffee is like bad, weed is chill.

XLR8R: Does you guys have a muse?

Prefuse 73: A person that inspires, like one person?

XLR8R: Yeah. A girlfriend, or wife or child?

Prefuse 73: I used to, I don't have a girlfriend anymore.

XLR8R: Madlib?

Madlib: My daughter. She's like me, we're like twins. She's trying to do her thing too, make beats and stuff or whatever.

XLR8R: How old is she?

Madlib: Seven. I didn't tell her to, she just did.

Prefuse 73: That's dope.

RJD2: That's hot.

Madlib: I bought her a drum set so she could play the drums. I play my drums, she plays hers. She's got badder rhythms than my homies.

XLR8R: Would you like her to be a musician when she grows up?

Madlib: No. Well, if she wants to.

XLR8R: Why not?

Prefuse 73: You don't wish this hell on anyone?

Madlib: Yeah, exactly, but if she wants to...

Prefuse 73: I think people think you make music and it's just easy and you get paid tons of money.

RJD2: You do get paid tons of money. I saw how much you got paid last night!

Prefuse 73: [laughing] Me? I didn't get paid shit last night! Oh yeah, I had my CDs. I just made some custom-made CDs—had some CDRs, drew on them, made some money.

Madlib: There you go, that's what I'm trying to do.

XLR8R: Do you guys want to speak on biters?

Madlib: No.

Prefuse 73: No.

RJD2: Why, you got a guilty conscience?

Prefuse 73: [laughing] No! Well, I had people say "Sorry I bit you on that track."

RJD2: So, now you're gassed up, think you're hot shit?

Prefuse 73: No, no, no, not like that! Hold on, we have to go outside for one second! No, biters—it's flattering and it's not flattering. I mean, once you hear [someone bite your track], it makes you do something different. Not *different*—you just want to evolve on what you started to do.

XLR8R: So, in some ways it's a good thing.

Prefuse 73: Yeah, I think it could probably push you if you hear 10,000 records that sound like yours.

XLR8R: Do you want a mainstream hip-hop audience to be listening to your beats, to be buying your records?

Madlib: I want people who love music in general to buy my stuff. That's how I am, I'm not just hip-hop—people that like good music period.

Prefuse 73: Me too. I want the crowd at my show to be across the board. Hip-hop heads, cool, whatever, jazz heads, indie rock heads—just if they're into the music. And the diversity of the crowd, which is what makes a show better anyway. I mean you got all these people in one place, and they're just amped on the music and that's dope.

XLR8R: You both do projects with emcees and vocalists, what's a dream project for you? Or someone you'd really love to work with?

Prefuse 73: [laughing] Just Ice.

Madlib: Herbie Hancock.

Prefuse 73: Oh, not just emcees?

Madlib: Oh, emcees? Whatever.

RJD2: You don't like emcees anymore?

Madlib: Ain't nobody making me go "Ohhh!"

XLR8R: Nobody?

Madlib: Nope.

"I LIKE TO MIX EVERYTHING IN I-POD HEADPHONES. YOU KNOW?
SO I KNOW IT'LL SOUND GOOD IN THE WORST
HEADPHONES I COULD GET."

XLR8R: That's depressing.

Prefuse 73: So, you're not a 50 Cent fan?

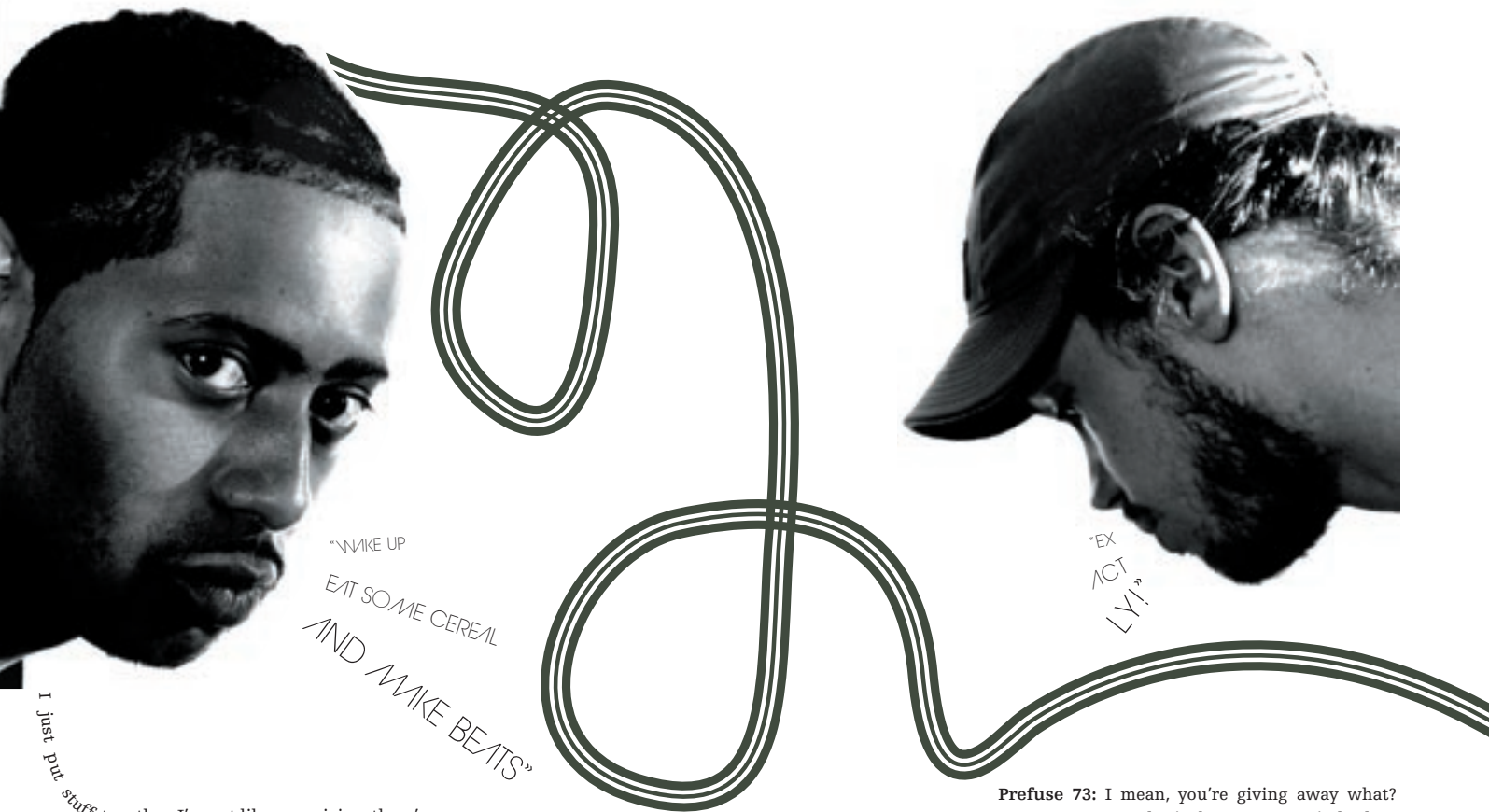
Madlib: I wasn't trying to hear it, but I heard it. It's cool if you're partying, but I'd rather listen to some Thelonious Monk, that's what I bump. All day.

XLR8R: You both record under different aliases and release side projects, and I'm wondering how that becomes another outlet for creativity, if it affords more freedom. Like for you, Scott, with Savath and Savalas.

Prefuse 73: I just like to play. I mean I like to make beats and I make them in a certain process, but I like to play music and write in a more traditional form. I mean, the shit I made recently sounds like Spanish folk music. It's not folk music, but it's a different outlet; like you were saying, exploring different music. On an MPC, you work in a certain way. It's just a different process. The compositional process is just totally different.

XLR8R: Otis, do you play your own instruments with Yesterdays New Quintet?





I just put stuff

WAKE UP

EAT SOME CEREAL
AND MAKE BEATS

EXACTLY

together. I'm not like a musician, there's no crazy solos or nothing, just like vibes put together; put a song together in my head, and just play it. There ain't nobody around, so I got to do it myself. Nobody can do it the way I want it, so I just do it myself.

Prefuse 73: I have to do that shit too. If you're playing alone, it can never be one hundred percent live...You never have a drummer just sitting next to you.

Madlib: All my new stuff, I just play drums. Just play the drums and add everything else.

Prefuse 73: See, I want to do that shit.

XLR8R: That's on what album?

Madlib: The albums I've been doing since the first Yesterday's New Quintet. I have like 30, 40 albums.

XLR8R: Of Yesterday's New Quintet stuff?

Madlib: Yeah.

XLR8R: Whoa. What are you going to do with them?

Madlib: I don't know. I just pick songs off each one and put an album together.

XLR8R: What about Quasimoto?

Madlib: Yeah, should be out soon, same old shit, like the last one... Shit ain't even supposed to be out, that shit was just for me.

Prefuse 73: [laughs]

XLR8R: What do you guys want people to be saying about you in 25 years?

Madlib: "He's still dope!"

Prefuse 73: Yeah, hopefully.

Madlib: "He's still doing something."

Prefuse 73: Yeah, still making music, valid music that people are still listening to, that communicates.

RJD2: Do you guys get worried about how hip-hop commodifies people's careers?

Madlib: Yeah, well, I don't worry about it.

Prefuse 73: That's the best thing about...

RJD2: Or do you just don't give a shit and do it anyway?

Madlib: Just do your shit, even if there wasn't no hip-hop scene.

Prefuse 73: I think doing different things helps. If you do different projects, doing live shit and whatever—like me doing Prefuse shit and me doing Savath and Savalas, having those separations and doing different shit, you [have] longevity.

Madlib: Yeah...longevity. You can't just do the same old shit.

RJD2: Do you guys feel pressure to get involved in the business aspect of your shit?

Prefuse 73: I can't. I need help, but I can't, I have so much shit to do music-wise.

Madlib: It's so hard.

Prefuse 73: I've been trying for two years to get a manager that I can trust and depend on to do things for me, but that's a lot of money you're giving up. That's a lot of percentage of—I mean, we make money, but we don't make *that* much fucking money. I mean, c'mon.

Madlib: Umm hmm.

Prefuse 73: I mean, you're giving away what? Twenty percent? That's the norm. I can't do that. I'm not really rich enough to do that, and cats that do have managers that make less than us, I'm like "How?" I mean, how do you pay for that shit and pay your rent?

Madlib: They're broke.

XLR8R: What's your daily routine as far as making music?

Madlib: Wake up, eat some cereal and make beats. Then it's about twelve o'clock at night and I have no windows, so I don't know what's what.

Prefuse 73: That's insane. I wake up, go straight for the coffee, café con leche, work, and then sometimes I'll try and stop for a minute in the afternoon, especially where I live now. Just walk around, listen to my headphones, listen to what I did, see if it sounds right, go back and mix it again. But I like to mix everything in iPod headphones, you know? So I know it'll sound good in the worst headphones I could get.

XLR8R: Who are you checking for production-wise?

Prefuse 73: [points to Madlib and RJD2] Him and him.

Madlib: I don't check for producers, I just listen for good songs. Serious, I'm just looking for some good songs.

Prefuse 73: That's what I'm saying, but the shit that both of them do for me, as far as contemporary people making beats and shit, it gets me. It gets me amped, it's totally different. We all do different shit, but I'm amped on it, you know?

Madlib: Everybody's different, [we] all have our own styles.

Prefuse 73: Exactly.

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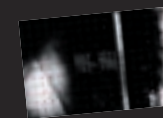
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THINK YOU HAVE A HECTIC LIFE? TRY JETTING
COAST TO COAST DOING SHOWS, RALLIES
AND RADIO: IT'S ALL IN A NIGHT'S WORK
FOR MR. LIF
WORDS AND IMAGES DJ ANNI

Boston-born/Berkeley-based MC Mr. Lif won't disclose his real name or age, but he will wax poetic about just about everything from wack emcees to wack foreign policy. 2002 saw the release of both his *Emergency Rations* EP and his *I, Phantom* album on Def Jux, plus the launch of his groundbreaking trivia game, *Devolution*, at www.mrlif.com. And when this four-time Boston Music Awards-winner isn't on tour with El-P and the rest of the Def Jux boys, or performing at local anti-war rallies, he's chilling with his dogs and working on rhymes. This is the tale of a dedicated artist, a hip-hop purist who brings it back to the real boom bap. This is a night in the life of Mr. Lif.



7:03 PM

ARRIVING AT THE VENUE.

Mr. Lif is nervous. "I feel like shit," he confides. Just off an East Coast tour with his partner Akrobatik, Lif is in San Francisco to headline a show at Slim's without Ak to back him up. It's his first solo tour on the West Coast, and Lif wants to impress: "This whole year is about standing alone," he stresses. After two years of touring in support of his labelmates, Lif's ready to stand alone, but he's afraid he might be unprepared. "I just want it to be good because this is my hometown now. I want to hit everyone with an uppercut, but tonight's gonna be a jab," he jokes.



7:18 PM

DINNER

Chicken, red potatoes, salad and some delicious beans and rice are the spread at Slim's kitchen. While chowing down, Lif goes back and forth with his tour manager over the details of the night. The t-shirts haven't arrived and the set list isn't finished, but Lif doesn't trip. He focuses on finishing his meal so they can do sound check and open the doors.

Thought of by many as the real underrated talent on the Def Jux roster, Mr. Lif has perfected the art of making heads both nod and think at the same time. Lif's 2002 full-length, *I, Phantom*, is an amazing concept album that details the struggles of a working man dealing with the pressures of family, career and ultimately, the nastiness of society as a whole. It's dense, confusing and depressing, but also utterly genius. For Lif, *I, Phantom* was "about taking some time to reflect on my youthful stumblings into adulthood." He continues: "I wanted to make something cohesive, a throwback to the days of *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick* or *De La Soul Is Dead*."

7:35 PM

SOUND CHECK

While the sound lady adjusts the levels, Lif runs through "Live at the Plantation," which details the struggle of a working man in corporate hell, in a song that questions capitalism and the American Way of Life itself.

Lif's politically active stance and socially-aware lyrics often get him compared to other "conscious" rappers like J-Live and Dead Prez. They are all part of a new crop of artists that harken back to the days of X-Clan, Public Enemy and Poor Righteous Teachers, when there really was a message in the music. "I'm just a cat influenced by the old school, when hip-hop was in its golden era, when it had an edge," he claims. "It was about being intelligent and aware." But on the flipside, he agrees that everything has its place. "There's a huge place for ignorance in rap. Without the gangs of the '70s, hip-hop would be a radically different place." Do artists have a duty to educate? "No," says Mr. Lif, "because I love NWA."

MICROPHONE CHECK
ONE, TWO



FAKTS ONE + LIF HAVE
A POW WOW BACKSTAGE



8:02 PM

BACKSTAGE, PRE-SHOW

As Oldominion, the Seattle-based opening act, get things going upstairs, Lif pores over a set list with his DJ, Fakts One. When asked about working with the dreadlocked MC, the Boston-based Fakts—Lif's workmate since 1998—smiles. "Basically, he's a pain in the ass. He's possibly the most critical, anal-retentive cat I've met when it comes to music. And that's good. But he's a pain in the ass."

10:17 PM

LIF GOES ON

From the opening skits to the final encore, Lif owns the crowd. He takes the audience on a lyrical and theatrical adventure, from shooting his boss during "Live at the Plantation" to a simulated encounter with President Bush. When Lif says "hip," the crowd says "hop," and the whole place strikes a b-boy pose when ordered. Seeing his songs take life on stage is a treat; some rap artists have trouble pulling off a live show, but not this cat. "You've got to be able to translate your recorded material to a live set," says Lif. "It's always such a let-down when you see artists live and they don't come off."



M.C.

MEANS

"MOVE THE CROWD"

11:46 PM

BACKSTAGE, POST-SHOW

A sweat-drenched Lif heads backstage triumphantly. "I'm happy. The show was good, I had a good time. I was stressed, but it gave reason to cut loose." Lif's been on tour for a while, and the love he gets backstage from his friends and girlfriend Rani signal how glad everyone is to see him back home, if only for a few days. After his West Coast dates, Lif plans to take a little time off. "I want to have a home life," he says. "I want summer with my girl!"



AIN'T NO PARTY LIKE
A THAI NOODLE PARTY!



12:37 AM

KING OF THAI RESTAURANT

Over pad thai and chicken satay, Lif talks about what he listens to on tour: "I've been listening to the new Beck album, *Sea Change*, and the *Purple Rain* soundtrack and *The Bends* by Radiohead. Oh, and how could I forget—the new Snoop Dogg! I've never heard a man dedicate an album to pimping the way Snoop did. He just laid the game down, track after track after track."

The long drives between gigs give Lif and his crew time to listen to some of the demos they get handed at shows. "We have 'Demo Power Hour,' because a lot of kids run up and give us demos. It might sound malicious, but it's not, because we actually listen to the demos, and most motherfuckers don't listen to demos at all. We have a grading system, and if something is just ultimately offensive—this is something we learned from Eyedea and Abilities—we do something called 'floating the CD,' which is to roll down the window and..." He pauses and looks down sadly. "It's unfortunate when it happens."

2:14 AM

BACK TO THE CRIB

It's late and things begin to get goofy. As many conversations with Mr. Lif go, we get to talking about his dogs. Lif and Rani have a Pomeranian named Pablo and a Chihuahua named Devi. "My Chihuahua steals my socks," he notes as Rani and Fakts nod in agreement. "I build up most of my breath control by chasing her around the crib trying to get my socks back." But the pups provide more than a cardio workout: "When I get upset I turn to Devi for words of wisdom. They also help me develop my voice, because I have to scream at them."

www.defjux.com



MR. LIF SAYS "PEACE!"

QUEEN &

THE MALE-DOMINATED WORLD OF REGGAE SASS AND WISDOM OF JAMAICA'S TEN UP: COURT IS IN SESSION, JUDGE LADY SAW PRESIDING.
WORDS: JON NELSON IMAGE: MIGO

WARRIOR

DANCEHALL IS NO MATCH FOR THE SKILL, FOREMOST FEMALE LYRICIST. MEN, LISTEN UP: COURT IS IN SESSION, JUDGE LADY SAW PRESIDING.



Tenor Saw's namesake, as heir to his champion style; Sister Nancy's modern equivalent as the First Lady DJ of Dancehall; and Billy Ocean's 21st century dream, as Caribbean warrior queen. Lady Saw (born Marion Hall) is and has been the lady of the moment in the male-dominated dancehall world, runnin' tings for 10 years now, thriving on her distinct voice, regal delivery and explicit sexuality. Though her often-intimidating female charisma draws crowds second only to top-tier Jamaican MCs like Beenie Man and Bounty Killer, it belies a sensitive side that maintains integrity

while making precarious crossover moves out of the dancehall.

Reggae dancehall, enjoying resurgent stateside popularity, is still the street sound of Jamaica—the musical embodiment of ghetto reality—where demanding crowds want nothing but the hardest *bumbaclot* sound business. This would seem to make it harder for Lady Saw to live up to the titles of First Lady. But after initially gaining notoriety for the brave vulnerability of "Find a Good Man," Lady Saw realized that to make it in the hot 'n' sweaty dancehall, she had to play it like the guys, keeping it raw, explicit and quick-witted. "Marion Hall is a very sensitive person," she explains. "Lady Saw, on the other hand, is a performer and she gives the people what they want. Being in a male-dominated business makes me tougher. I *have* to be tough to survive. The direction of the business is not one of sensitivity, and my demeanor reflects that." We first see it in "Healing," one of her earliest hits with Beenie Man: "Yuh a outlaw and me a hot gal/ Want it real raw/ Beenie Man yuh nah stall/ Give mi the loving make mi bawl." On the incendiary "Backshot," on which she blazes the Superstar riddim with Spragga Benz, Saw lets fly the x-rated verses: "The main reason why mi love it from behind/ Yu can reach under mi belly rub mi clit same time/ It gi mi ah extra vibes fi gi yu ah better wine/ Right ya now Mr. Spragga come shot mi wid yu nine."

But she's far from just a sexual dominatrix on the mic—Lady Saw also drops a number of antagonistic, you-can't-mess-with-me challenges to the men. On "No Matta Me" she charges furiously through the anthemic Bookshelf riddim (best known by Sean Paul's "Deport Them"), making Wayne Wonder and Mr. Vegas sound like feminine sweetness as she twists

muscular, carefree braggadocio around the big, hollow keys. "My presence and delivery intimidates men," she flatly observes. "I notice this when I go to do stage shows, and there are deejays that rush to go on before me because they're intimidated by the response I can draw from the audience. I hold my own and it's intimidating for a man not to be able to compete with that." Her tactic is clear: no matter the format or style, Lady Saw is a warrior queen in control.

Still, as a keen veteran, she's more to offer than just sexual banter. "In the beginning I was more slack and raw," she points out, "but over the years I've matured a little more in order to have a wider appeal, like the tune [I did] with No Doubt, 'Underneath It All.' I will always give it to the people raw, but my music will continue to grow."

The Sly and Robbie-produced "Underneath It All" simultaneously asserts female solidarity and achieves crossover appeal, as Saw slows her flow gracefully to compliment Gwen Stefani's sultry skank. Not all crossovers are successful—as shown by Beenie Man's blatant mainstream posturing with Janet Jackson—but Lady Saw succeeds by maintaining the yardcore vibe. "When I make these tunes, I get praise, but it's because I never change my approach. It's still Lady Saw you're getting on the record—still raw, not watered down.

"I have my own studio now. I want to exercise my creativity and give direction to the music. My productions will represent dancehall, but I won't limit myself," she confides. With Greensleeves and VP Records's lock on domestic releases severely limiting stateside availability—her last full-length dropped four years ago—she's poised for a high-profile new release.

“ I WILL ALWAYS GIVE IT TO THE PEOPLE RAW, BUT MY MUSIC WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. ”

Tasks that would appear complicated and difficult, Lady Saw makes look easy, bullying the hyper-masculine world of dancehall with her clear and catchy patois. She flips the script ingeniously, making her female position allow for even greater freedom from traditionally male-dominated roles and rules. After all, who's gonna mess with the Caribbean Warrior Queen? Billy Ocean? ❖

www.ladysaw.com

www.vprecs.com





JEROME SYDENHAM

“THE EDGIER SIDE OF THINGS IN NEW YORK THESE DAYS IS QUITE SMALL”



JACKIN' THE BIG APPLE

ATTACKED FROM THE OUTSIDE AND CLEANED UP FROM THE INSIDE, NEW YORK HAS BEEN THROUGH A LOT IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS. THE CITY'S NIGHTLIFE SCENE, ONCE THE ENJOY OF THE WORLD, HAS BEEN REDUCED TO A CLUSTER OF PERSECUTED, SMOKE-FREE CLUBS AND BARS. BUT THE UNDERGROUND IS BITING BACK. XLR87 TAKES A LOOK AT NEW YORK'S MUSICAL HISTORY AND SEES HOW THINGS ARE SHAPING UP FOR THE FUTURE.

WORDS AND IMAGES PAUL SULLIVAN

+ FOUNDATION SOUNDS

“Musicians have always come to New York City to get a break,” avers ex-Body & Soul resident Danny Krivit, prodding a piece of apple pie thoughtfully with his fork. “There have been so many eras of music here. Before my time—back in the '50s for example—there was the Brill Building, where songwriters and producers all hung out together, and doo-wop artists came to pitch their demos. New York has always had that sense of something happening, of there being opportunities in music. There are pockets of music all over the world, but New York has always been a key place.”

We're in a café just off Second Avenue in downtown Manhattan, an area Danny and his family have lived in all their lives. Krivit's mother was a former jazz singer and his father was the owner of The Ninth Circle, a 30-year-old Greenwich Village hotspot. Krivit's comments about New York's musical significance are right. For most of the 20th century, the city has been an epicenter for popular music. It's created styles, instigated scenes and catalyzed movements, and its history is inextricably entwined with sound.

The first radio broadcast took place in Massachusetts, but New York DJs Murray The K, Martin Block and Alan Freed first popularized the medium. And although Paris invented the discothèque during WWII, New York's natural exuberance and bustling nightlife made it a socio-cultural phenomenon.

New York constantly pops and fizzes with a potent energy, and it's long moved to the rhythmic cadences of a thousand cultures and their music. Thelonious Monk once said that “New York is jazz.” More broadly, New York is, simply, music—all kinds of it seem to fit in

“[NEW YORK HOUSE] HAD THE ENERGY THAT THE CITY CONTAINS, THE SAME PACE. IN THE UK IT’S BECOME A FAD OR A TREND, BUT HERE VETERANS LIKE PARADISE GARAGE FOUNDER MEL CHEREN CAN BE SEEN IN CLUBS AT 6AM.....AND HE’S IN HIS ‘70S.”

+ BEN JOHNSON



NEW JERSEY ON THE HUDSON



SATELLITE RECORDS

here, which accounts for the constant influx of budding and seasoned musicians from all genres. From Greenwich Village folk-rock to East Village punk rock, hip-hop and be-bop and doo-wop, disco to salsa and soul, from yesteryear’s Vaudeville hits to tomorrow’s retro no-wave, New York has constantly been alive with sound. But in 2003, things have changed.

+ CHANGE HAS COME

February 15, 2003. An anti-war demonstration in downtown Manhattan. The plan to march past the UN has been thwarted by federal judges. The rally is therefore stationary, and peaceful. That is, until suddenly, and for no apparent reason, policemen in full riot gear push and prod us onto the sidewalks with batons and ride into us on horses. People are confused and frightened. Some are knocked to the ground. Surprise gives way to anger, but those who fight back are violently dragged out and hauled off to unknown destinies. The crowd is dispersed. No marching. No gathering. No demonstration. No mention of this rough treatment in the New York Times the next day. Democracy is dead.

New York’s music scene has changed at least partly because New York has changed. In the last two years the Big Apple’s hard core has been badly shaken. Attacked from the outside and sanitized from within, the City That Never Sleeps now seems all too ready for an early night. 9/11, war in the Middle East, a receding economy, the government’s attack on America’s rave promoters via the anachronistic RAVE act, former mayor Giuliani’s Quality Of Life campaign and current mayor Bloomberg’s continuation of the clampdowns (he recently announced that he’d like to see all bars and clubs closing at 2AM)—they’ve all taken their toll and created an atmosphere of uncertainty and paranoia amongst the clubbing cognoscenti.

“First of all, many clubs in New York City are faced with the old cabaret laws from the 1930s that make it difficult for venues to allow dancing,” explains Conrad Neblett, who hosts the soulful Together In Spirit party every Sunday in the Chelsea area of Manhattan. “Secondly,

it's not easy finding a club owner that understands that it takes time to build a party. Our music is not played enough on mainstream radio except for a weekend club classic show late at night when folks are out dancing. The general public is not being exposed to the music. Together in Spirit is one of a few parties that has managed to survive, and is committed to thriving in these challenging times, because more than ever people are and will be looking for places to release the tension."

Back in the day, disco offered that release to the city's black, gay and Hispanic communities. Eventually, a handful of Chicago producers began to digitally distill the genre into a pure body music that fit perfectly into New York's multi-rhythmic heartbeat. And its post-disco infrastructure was already built up by labels like Prelude, West End and Salsoul; by DJs and remixers like Krivit, Larry Levan, Tom Moulton, Tony Humphries, Timmy Regisford and Boyd Jarvis; and by clubs like The Loft and The Paradise Garage. But unlike New York's previous black music styles—disco, hip-hop or R&B—house didn't blow up. While it hit the European charts immediately, it crept into the US via the underground, where it's more or less stayed. "The way that New York responded to house music was no big deal," shrugs Ben Johnson, an English ex-pat who works for Shelter Recordings and helps run the weekly Shelter party at Club Speed. "It wasn't glorified, [since] it simply represented the [New York] way of life. It had the energy that the city contains, the same pace. In the UK it's become a fad or a trend, but here veterans like [Paradise Garage founder] Mel Cheren can be seen in clubs at 6AM—and he's in his 70s. It's important that this element stays alive, and I'm thankful that the NYC scene hasn't changed, because it still manages to influence the music scene worldwide."

EVERYBODY'S AT THE PARTY

By the early '80s, New York's house scene was the envy of the world. As late-'80s disco gave way to early-'90s rave, venues like The Limelight, Save The Robots and NASA catalyzed the emerging scene. Producers like Frankie Bones, Todd Terry, David Morales, Blaze, Tony Humphries, François K and Masters At Work built a "New York sound" that blended heavyweight slabs of punchy funk with mellower musical vibes that people often attributed to a "New Jersey sound."

In the mid-'90s, the city's scene attracted a more international DJ culture. Rob Rives (a.k.a. dubby house/techno act Floppy Sounds) witnessed the changes as he worked at François K's Axis studios and engineered for tribal house maestro Danny Tenaglia. "Back then, things were very exciting because of the music that was coming out at the time," he states. "The Basic Channel/Maurizio stuff was starting, and Plastic City was really on it with The Timewriter and Terry Lee Brown's first LPs. Tenaglia was playing a lot of druggy, wild things at The Tunnel and Twilo, and it got really intense on the dancefloor. Body and Soul was still in a good period. New York just seemed full of possibilities and potential. We obviously had no idea how devastating [something like 9/11] was going to be, not just in human terms but economically and creatively. Now, people are simply trying to survive rather than worry about creative growth or artistic development. It's a bit scary here these days."

SHUTTIN' EM DOWN

Between 1997 and 2000, New York's authorities closed no less than 69 bars and clubs for violating the cabaret statutes. Back in 1960, there were 12,000 venues for New Yorkers to party in. Today there are just about 300. A 1998 survey by the New York Nightlife Association (NYNA) stated that music and dance clubs contributed almost three billion dollars annually to the city's economy, and had created more than 27,000 jobs.

Cabaret laws, drug busts, dwindling audiences and good old-fashioned club-land politics have affected virtually all of the city's major hotspots. Twilo, The Limelight, Body and Soul, The Sound Factory, Vinyl, The Tunnel, The Roxy, Exit—all these places have either been closed forever, or relaunched beyond recognition. Jerome Sydenham, owner of the Afrobeat and house-centered Ibadan label, speaks for many who are frustrated about the dearth of decent venues for regular parties.

"The edgier side of things in New York these days is quite small," he says. "There has been a lack of venues, or more specifically a lack of venues with the right sound. Sometimes the process of setting up a venue and getting around the cabaret laws makes it impossible. You can't just rent a place and start dancing in it. There's even a special squad set up just to squash illegal parties. The city is broke and needs to make money any way [it] can, so they're just screwing everyone."

A NEW BIRTH

February 17, 2003. Presidents Day. New York City. A fierce blizzard rages through Manhattan's grid. Sidewalks and transit routes, normally a tumult of sound and motion, are eerily quiet. But there is music. Down below, in the subterranean belly of the city, subway trains create clangorous backdrops for the city's buskers. A trio of Latin jazz musicians brighten up Bedford Ave.; b-boys throw shapes to distorted beats at Union Square. A lone folk singer serenades rats at 28th St. The beat goes on in the real NY underground.

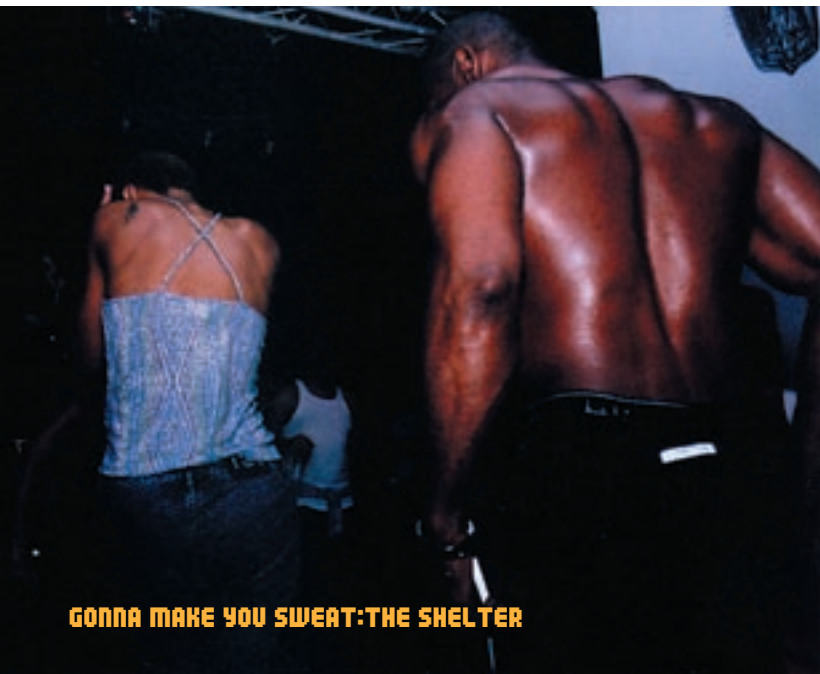
New York has been through bad times before. It's certainly been through political times before. The late '60s were chaotic, with student rebellions, the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement all tearing at the fabric of American society. Musicians responded accordingly. Dylan, Baez and Seeger incorporated events into their songs, and James Brown and Aretha Franklin certainly had something to say for black rights. Some believe that the disco scene's success was a celebration of America surviving Nixon.

And now? New York's digerati seem ominously quiet in the face of recent events. Where are the musical stances against terrorism, war, and anti-democratic laws? Thankfully, there are some that care. "The great thing about house music is that it always was one of the genres that could speak out and people would listen," claims Kevin Hedge, one part of Blaze and recently appointed overseer at West End Records. "The whole thing about Blaze was incorporating messages of love in the music, whether they are messages of romantic love or world love."

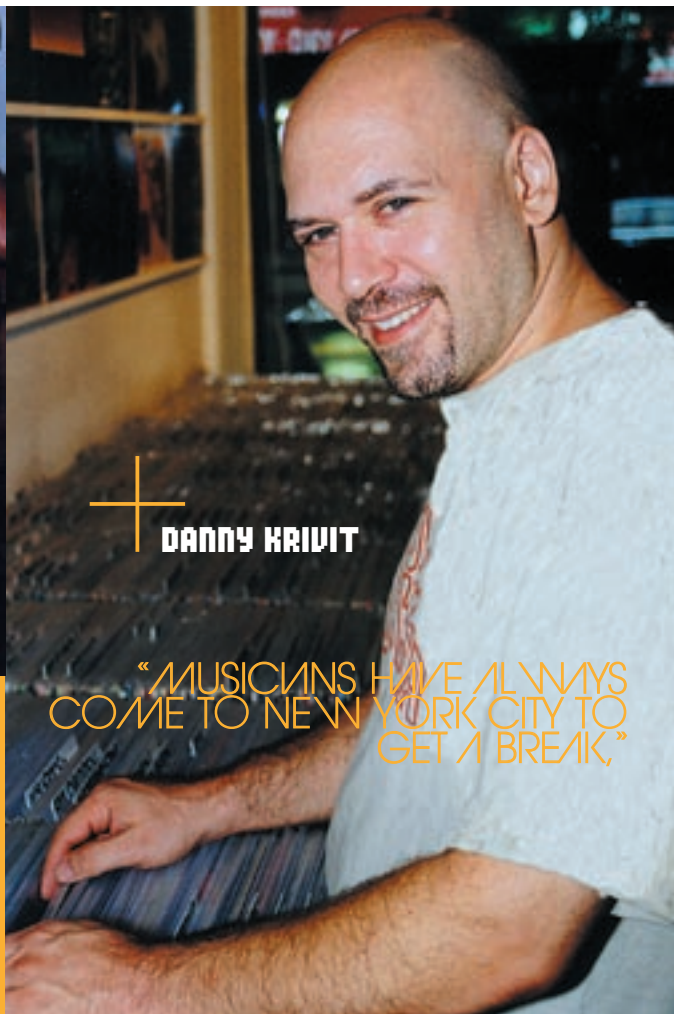


BLAZE

"THE POLITICAL TIMES HERE, ESPECIALLY AFTER 9/11, MAKES OUR MUSIC MORE RELEVANT THAN EVER. POLITICAL SONGS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN RELEVANT TO US."



GO NNA MAKE YOU SWEAT:THE SHELTER



+ DANNY KRAVIT

“MUSICIANS HAVE ALWAYS COME TO NEW YORK CITY TO GET A BREAK.”

The political times here, especially after 9/11, make our music more relevant than ever. Political songs have always been relevant to us. The PLUR vibe is a very real thing.”

While almost everyone agrees that Gotham isn't looking her best right now, people seem generally positive about the future. Eternally tough, New Yorkers thrive on adversity. Samir Hall of Brooklyn's Clairaudience music collective echoes the views of many when he says the key to reviving the beleaguered club scene lies in the lessons of past.

“Club music used to be whatever music was played in a club,” he says. “Partying at that time in New York was fun. It was about dancing for eight or nine hours without getting tired, leaving the Garage at 1:30 in the afternoon and going to Washington Square and carrying on what you didn't finish in the club. It was about taking an active interest in other people's well being, like a little family. Nowadays that aspect of community is gone, and we need to get it back.”

Together in Spirit host Conrad Neblett has been busy organizing round table discussions with the city's scenesters to actively promote the music he loves so much. “This music is not a fad—it's a lifestyle. Through the many ups and downs of the world and club scene, 'soulful dance music,' as we like to call it, has managed to survive when other art forms have gone by the wayside. There's a need to market our music and scene differently. There aren't enough radio stations promoting the music, and to my knowledge [no] videos associated with the music. As a matter of fact, the singer doesn't get proper exposure, because the [frontperson] is the DJ/producer. This is a major challenge in our industry and needs to be addressed immediately.”

—
—
—

+ RECREATIVE

A cold, rainy night in February. Club Shelter, 2AM. Positivity. Collectivity. Spirituality. Lights slash madly across writhing bodies. Libidinous bass-heavy riddims pump out of the speakers, lifting rib cages, demanding movement. Timmy Regisford is hunched over the turntables like a doting father, working his magic as he has done every week for 11 years. Out on the floor is a community. Black, white, gay, straight—everyone celebrating together. Celebrating what? Love. Life. Music. The dancefloor spirit of The Loft, The Garage and Body & Soul lives on.

“New York is having a musically creative time,” insists Stefan Prescott, owner of the city's Dance Trax label. “Giuliani is often used as an excuse to explain the state of the scene right now, but there are other reasons. Promoters aren't running parties properly, there isn't enough



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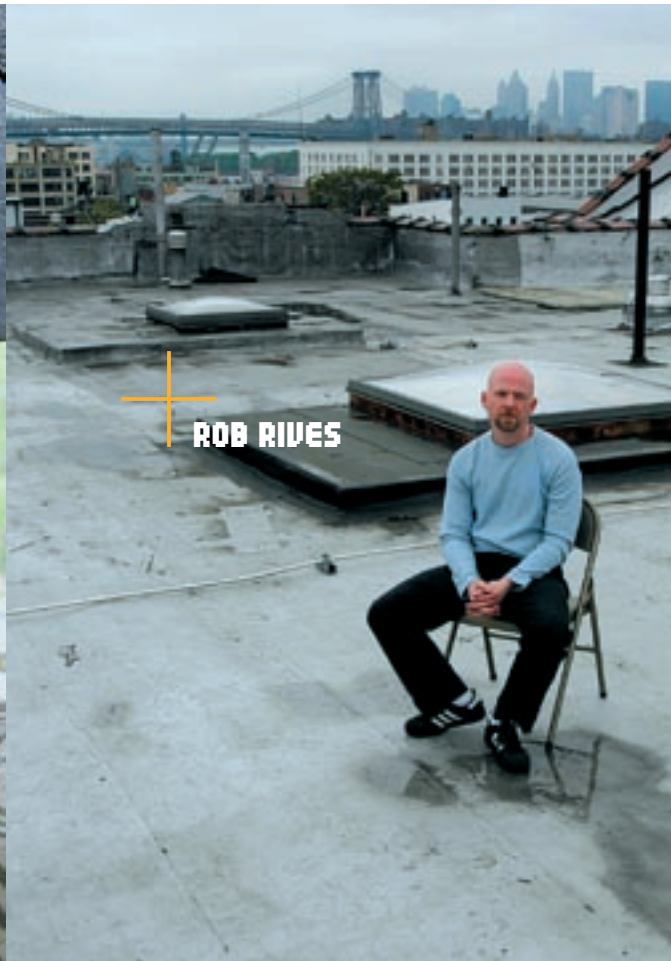
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CONRAD



ROB RIVES

"TOGETHER IN SPIRIT IS ONE OF FEW PARTIES THAT HAS MANAGED TO SURVIVE, AND IS COMMITTED TO THRIVING IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES, BECAUSE MORE THAN EVER PEOPLE ARE AND WILL BE LOOKING FOR PLACES TO RELEASE THE TENSION."

diversity in the clubs, and the scene is too categorized. This music was called "underground music" for a reason, and it never was so split up into so many divisions. Why should we complain if it's heading back that way? In the last few months I've been to underground parties that have been set up in restaurants and underground spaces, where people have run in a sound system and are taking chances again. That can only be a good thing."

It seems that while some in New York are complaining and scratching their heads over the current state of affairs, others are embracing—and actively enforcing—change. Bobbito and Rich Medina are throwing parties in art galleries; Danny Krivit has started a night (718 Sessions) in Brooklyn's DUMBO district; Danny Tenaglia has bought a loftspace in Long Island and built his own club space inside; Junior Sanchez has incorporated hip-hop and rock into his club nights at Centrofly to create a wider entertainment package. All this activity proves that trying to suppress the underground is like trying to push a cork into water: the harder you try, the more it bounces back.

Disco veteran and all-around don dada Mel Cheren—possibly one of the longest active proponents of the New York scene—sums it up. "It's unfortunate that this music has fragmented into so many categories. There are a number of good DJs around, but they sold out for a good DJ booth. Instead of being leaders and educating people about music, they took the easy way out. That's sad. I could pull off that crap today, but my conscience wouldn't allow it. I know good music, and I hope before I leave this earth I can educate people and get this music to them. We in New York have a chance to build from the ground up again, and maybe we can learn from our previous mistakes. After all, where there's life, there's hope."

Paul Sullivan is a frequent XLR8R contributor and author of the new book *Waking Up In Iceland* (Sanctuary Press).

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HEAD FOR
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AFRICA. LITTLE
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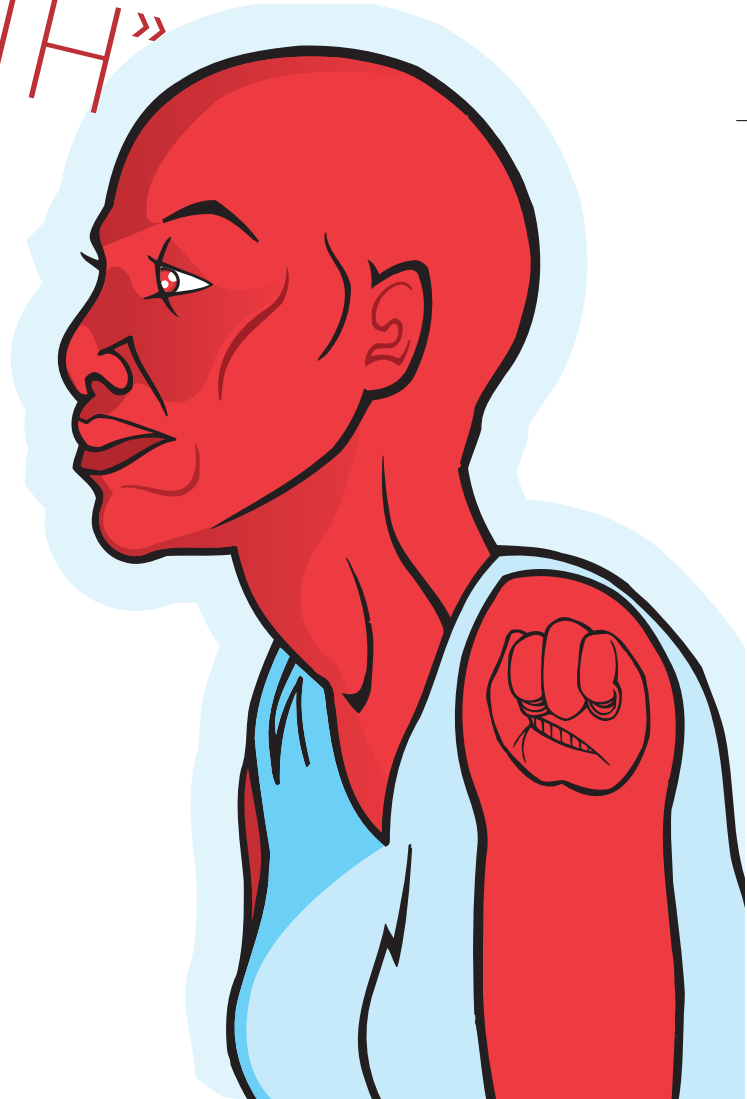
WORDS FINGATHING
ILLUSTRATIONS CHRISTOPHER DRURY

“AFTER THIS MOMENTOUS BEGINNING
WE FELT THAT ANYTHING COULD HAPPEN”

FINGA BIOGRAPHICS

We're Fingathing, a group from Manchester, UK that includes turntablist Peter Parker, double bassist Sneaky and visual artist Chris Drury. Our music is a culmination of all styles—from hip-hop to just plain party-arty music—while our visual output highlights Chris's original work, including his animated mutant wrestlers in action.

Our live shows caught the eye of the British Council, who sent us to South Africa to promote British culture and publicize what is going on musically in our homeland right now. We'd previously been fortunate enough to go to Romania and Latvia for the British Council, both of which were amazing experiences. But they were totally different from where we were about to go. Every time we told someone about the tour, they'd tell us how dangerous South Africa is, and that we'd need loads of injections because of all the disease. It was funny, because none of them had ever been there but somehow knew all of this. They were all wrong.



ISLAND JAMS

After a stopover in Johannesburg, our first destination was the truly beautiful island nation of Mauritius. It's a tiny island blanketed with sugar cane, which is their main economic resource. I don't think any group from Manchester had ever been there, so they were mad excited. They treated us like stars, which for us was weird, but cool. We did loads of press and radio interviews and it looked like the show was gonna be hype. There aren't any buses on the island, and our gig was right outside of our hotel on the waterfront, which was hard to get to. We didn't know what to expect.

We had a few hours off on the day before the gig, and a top local guy—a promoter on the island—took us to his house to chill. It was on the other side of the island, which was far more natural and beautiful. We went snorkeling (*and* got stung, ouch!) and did a radio interview on the beach. We felt like we were in paradise. While we visited and chilled, we learned more about the island and its music history. Mauritius has its own indigenous rhythm called Sega. Later, our host took us to the ghettos where the best percussionists on the island live. It was arranged that we would jam with some of these traditional instrumentalists after our show.

The day of the gig came, and we were really looking forward to it. Everyone was mega-hyped. The most amazing thing was that hundreds of mostly poor kids had walked miles to get to the show. The promoter told us this was the first time this had ever happened on the island. We felt *great*. The show was a total success—the kids were breakdancing the entire time. Afterwards, we jammed with three or four other musicians, Sega style, which went over great with the Mauritian crowd. It was special for us as well, as we'd never jammed with musicians playing sitar, tabla and djembe [drum]—there was even a guy who played hundreds of pistachio nuts tied together. It was, to say the least, a bit of a spiritual experience.

"PARKER'S
TURNTABLES
LOOKED
LIKE THEY'D
BEEN
DRAGGED OFF
A BUILDING
SITE—THEY WERE
COVERED IN
CEMENT!"

BUT ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN

After this momentous beginning we felt that anything could happen, and our next destination was Mozambique. We had plenty of time to discuss the gig, as it truly pissed down all the next day—proper tropical storm shit! A nearby island had been devastated by the storm, showing us the reality that this weather could flip out of control at any moment.

After one more stopover in Jo'berg, we were off to Mozambique. *Aaagh!* The heat! The weather in Mozambique is *serious*. When we arrived, we had to rest at the hotel where we reflected on the poverty that we had witnessed just coming a short distance from the airport. We were starting to appreciate just how damn lucky we were and how different life is out here.

First, we were taken to a press and media convention in Mozambique's capital, Maputo, with Prime Minister Pascoal Mocumbi and loads of local artists in attendance. The local language is Portugese, so it was quite funky trying to communicate. But we got through the language barrier okay, and had a top time with the locals. The next day we were to do a music workshop for the local kids, which we looked forward to, but also realized it might be a bit of a task. The resources in Mozambique are kind of sparse: Parker's turntables looked like they'd been dragged off a building site—they were covered in cement! We had an interpreter who helped explain what the hell we were doing, but the kids had only heard mainstream rap—we were quite a shock to the system, I think.

The same thing happened at the gig the next day. All of the local acts were sounding like their jiggy heroes. They were cool guys and everyone loved them, but when we went on people didn't know what to make of us. Even the British Council people were kind of stunned as we were introduced as a hip-hop band, when the truth is we're not. Far from it. Our sound spreads much wider.



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“TO BE HONEST, IT FELT **INTIMIDATING** TRAVELING THERE, AS WE GOT INTO **A BULLETPROOF VAN** FOR THE JOURNEY.”



It didn't bother us too much, though, because we'd never forget our time there. While in Mozambique we witnessed something quite unique—Mr. Arson, a local artist who is massive in the local people's eyes did an AIDS awareness demo at a school in Maputo. He asked if we'd go with him because he wanted us to see how it was for youngsters growing up in Maputo. Of course, we agreed. So, after a heavy night's partying we were up at 8 AM and off to the school with Mr. Arson and his crew with their PA.

On approach to the spot we saw a massive crowd of kids screaming and shouting and having loads of fun cheering on their mates who were playing football on the concrete. On second look we noticed that not one person in the 80-strong crowd had a pair of shoes. Still, they were so happy and went totally nuts when Mr. Arson and his boys set up the PA. Kids were dancing—it was such a buzz. The DJ had those CD players with a built-in mixer, and he was playing this super-fast 2-step stuff.

Three young boys—who were just incredible movers—pulled kids from the crowd and everyone was joining in. We'd never seen this much enthusiasm at a demo before. Mr. Arson did his performance and went on to tell the crowd that there was a group from Manchester there. They went nuts again, and he dragged us up onto the homemade podium. Then it was time for a serious note, as everyone well knows that AIDS is a huge problem in Africa. The kids seemed to listen to the lecture and take it all in. After seeing that performance and these children, our lives felt a little bit different.

JO'BERG BOUNCE

The final chapter of this tour took place in Johannesburg. We were supposed to go to Cape Town also but unfortunately it got cancelled. Johannesburg is big—*real* big, and very westernized compared to Mozambique or Mauritius. They seemed very excited to have us there, and we did loads of press leading up to the day of the gig. One TV station even made a half-hour documentary on us, as we're one of the first bands to get out there and tour. It felt great, and we were determined to repay everyone by blowing the roof off the club!

There was another UK hip-hop act there called Blak Twang, real cool peoples. They joined us one morning to go on a tour of Soweto. For those of you who don't know, Soweto is the size of a city, but it's truly a ghetto, where blacks were segregated up until only 15 or so years ago. To be honest, it felt intimidating traveling there, as we got into a bulletproof van for the journey.

We were taken to Nelson Mandela's house, where he was arrested before his incarceration. Again, it was a spiritual experience as we got some firsthand perspective of his struggle. What a man. Outside, we bought some trinkets from two women street vendors and were quickly surrounded by half-naked kids rubbing their stomachs and pointing to their mouths. It cut us all up, and we didn't know what to do—we were rescued by the ladies who sent the kids running along. Emotions ran heavy this day as we learned how fucked up life really is and how wrong humans can be sometimes. Seeing all this first hand has changed us all, but all we can do is go back and tell others how they don't know what it's really like in South Africa.

The night of the gig came and the club was packed. The people there were more in touch with the underground music scene and we knew we were gonna smash it. Blak Twang played and explained how it was an honor for us to be there. They're of Nigerian descent and the crowd loved them. We went on and flipped it. People saw Chris's artwork flash up on the screens and we let them have it—what a night! Parker DJed for a couple of hours after the live show and got really wasted, much to the enjoyment of the crowd.

Afterwards, offers came in for us to come back at the end of the year to do some festival and to play in Cape Town. What a trip. It was quite an experience, something that we'll never forget. South Africa is one of the most beautiful places we've ever been and the people are beautiful too—just like in Manchester!

www.fingathing.com

AK 1200

AT CLOSE RANGE



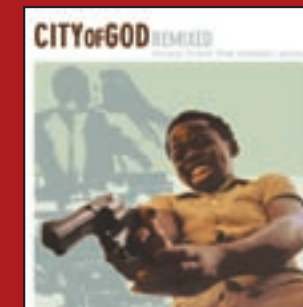
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WORLDISC
1959-1960s

Owned by Clement "Coxsone" Dodd (one of many).
Artists Include: Alton Ellis, Theopolis Beckford,
Chuck & Dobby, The Mellow Larks, Aubrey Adams
and the Dewdroppers, The Charmers



SHE GET UP AND SCANK

Early '80s
Artists Include: Michael Forbes, Triston Palma
(Triston Palmer)



BEVERLY'S RECORDS

1960s
Owned by Lesley Kong. Artists include: Desmond
Dekker, Derrick Morgan, Maytals, Jimmy Cliff, Lloyd
Clarke, Gaylads, Pioneers, Melodians



MATADOR RECORDS

Late '60s/early '70s
Owned by Lloyd "the Matador" Daley
Artists include: Alton Ellis, The Uniques, U-Roy,
Matador All Stars, Don D Junior



HIGH SCHOOL

1970s
Artists include: Lloyd & Kerry, Norman Brown,
Barington Spence, Jackie Brown, Young Al Capone,
Bunny Brown



GRADUATES

Early '70s
Artists Include: Charles Hanna, Charles Hanna & The
Graduates



TRAMP

Late '60s
Artists Include: The Melodians, The Uniques



SUPREME

1960s/early '70s
Owned by Clement "Coxsone" Dodd
Artists include: Samantha Rose, Carlton & His
Shoes, Gladiators, Ken Boothe



STUDIO 1 (First version of logo)

1960s
Owned by Clement "Coxsone" Dodd.
Artists include: Abyssinians, Alton Ellis, Bob Andy,
Bob Marley, Cables, Frankie Paul, John Holt, Lone
Ranger, Pablove Black, Sound Dimension
(there are literally dozens)



TREASURE ISLE

1960s
Owned by Duke Reid. Artists include: Alton Ellis,
Derrick Morgan, Dobby Dobson, Hopeton Lewis, U-Roy
Justin Hinds, Paragons, Phyllis Dillon, Techniques
(similarly to Studio 1, there are literally dozens)

STARS ON 45

WITH ALL THINGS VINTAGE REGGAE MAKING A COMEBACK—FROM
ROCKERS TO BLOOD & FIRE REISSUES, REGGAE ICON T-SHIRTS AND
ALBUM-COVER COFFETABLE BOOKS—REGGAE 7" LABEL DESIGNS REFLECT
A SIGNIFICANT YET OFTEN OVERLOOKED ASPECT OF THE CULTURE.
PRESENTED HERE ARE JUST A FRACTION...

COMPILED BY DAVID J NEISSBERG ESSAY BY STEVE BARROW

Looking at these labels, taken from original Jamaican 7" vinyl discs of the last 45 years, a whole history of the music scene can be glimpsed. Thus, the earliest labels here, like the Simms & Robinson on Worldisc, are modelled on US R&B labels of the period. Although the legendary producer Clement "Coxsone" Dodd did use the hand drawn approach for his early, *Studio 1* label, he soon reverted to his original US inspiration, seen by the "US" look of both his Coxsone imprint, as well the examples from his competitors at Treasure Isle and Beverley's. The latter was a shop that sold records out of premises that also served as an ice-cream parlour—hence, the "teen" imagery. Producer Lloyd Daley, a contemporary of Coxsone Dodd who also ran a sound system called Lloyd the Matador. His label was also called Matador, invoking both the bravery of the bullfighter and his "killer" role; a sound killer in fact.....

By the seventies, the thematic concerns of label designers had expanded considerably. Images were borrowed from everywhere, cartoon figures like Top Cat, the NASA space program, Hollywood heroes like Rambo or Heavyweight boxing, in the case of deejay Joe Lewis's George Floorman, featuring rapper Lewis delivering big fight lyrics over a cut of Errol Dunkley's "Down Below." Often, labels became a badge of the producer or artist identity, with headshot looking out at prospective buyers, like a trader standing in front of his wares.

The seventies also saw a rapid increase in the number of "one-man" record labels, especially among the more Rasta-oriented artists who controlled every facet of production. Generally, these producers didn't employ professional designers, preferring to design their own labels to make an ideological point of Rasta self-sufficiency. Rupert Reid's "Africa Must Be Free," for example, comes on a label called Mandingo; which depicts African artifacts and displays the African colors of red, black and green.

By the eighties, labels began to overtly reflect the dancehall milieu—like She Get Up And Scank(sic) and Dance Hall Records—or to celebrate ghetto runnings like the craze for doing wheelies on bikes or the dominance of the minibus in Kingston's public transport system. Often these are drawn in stick figure style, like the dancehall comics once put out by effects- and intro-man Joe Lickshot. Everyone could make a little bit of money contributing to the dancehall runnings. The greatest dancehall cartoonist Wifred Limonious had a big influence on design, with his excellent series of LP covers; this imagery continues to this day in the look of labels like A We Name We.

With the advent of the computer, the hand-done look has faded out somewhat. Today's labels reflect the blend of dancehall and hip-hop/ b-boy culture that underlies the current resurgence of reggae internationally, while others still portray the Africanist, "New Rasta" outlook of such as Luciano and Sizzla.



BLACK STAR

Mid '70s

Artists Include: Barrington Spence, The Loving Brothers, Justin Hinds, Willie Williams



BLACK LINK INTERNATIONAL

Mid '70s

Artists Include: African Brothers, Johnson Anthony



AFRIK

Mid to late '70s

Artists include: Stamma Haughton, Jah Ruby, Tradition, Barry Biggs, U Brown, Everton Dacres



SPIDERMAN

Late '70s

Owned By Lloyd "Spider Man" Campbell.
Artists Include: George Earl, Joy White, Itals, Skin-Flesh & Bones, Ronnie Davis, Lloyd Hemmings



HULK

Mid '70s

Owned by Blackbeards (Tappa Zukie's brother).
Artists Include: Ken Boothe, Johnny Clarke



THE THING

Mid '70s

Artists Include: Gregory Isaacs, Heptones, Junior Byles, I Roy, Sang Hugh



PRINCE BUSTER

1960s

Artists include: Derrick Morgan, Eric "Monty" Morris, Bobby Aitken, Colin and Winston, Prince Buster



MANDINGO

Late '70s

Artists include: Ranking Joe, General Echo, Nathan Skyers, Hortense Ellis, Rupert Reid



AFRICAN MUSEUM

Late '70s/early '80s

Artists Include: Gregory Isaacs, Augustus Pablo, Mighty Diamonds, The Viceroy, Sounds Combine, DJ Dango



BARBELL

Mid to late '70s

Artists Include: Cornell Campbell, Johnnie Clarke, Horace Andy, Wayne Jarrett



IRON FIST

Mid '70s

Owned By C. Prehay. Artist: Augustus Pablo



GEORGE FLOORMAN

1974 (a one-off label)

Artist: Joe Lewis



BONGOMAN

Mid '70s

Artists Include: Horace Andy, Prince Jazzbo, Belltones, Bonny & Skitter, Burning Spear



SHALIMAR

1971-1973

Owned by Mr Mahtani. Artists Include: Hofners Brothers, Stranger Cole



NEGUSA NAGAST

1970s

Owned by Big Youth. Artists Include: Lloyd Willacy, Big Youth, U-Roy



SHAOLIN TEMPLE

Late '70s

Owned by Dillinger. Artist: Dillinger



DEFENDERS

Early '70s

Artist: Vivian "Yabby You" Jackson & The Defenders



RAMBO

Mid '80s

Artists Include: Admiral Bailey, Josey Wales



WELL CHARGE

Mid '70s
Owned by Joe Joe Hookim.
Artists include: Revolutionaries, Delroy Wilson,
Dillinger, Mighty Diamonds, Hell & Fire



SHOCK

1970s
Owned by Joe Gibbs. Artists include: The Destroyers,
Winston Wright, Peter Tosh



ATOMIC BUM

Early '80s
Artists include: Ringo, Clarence Parkes



SHEPHERD

Mid to late '70s
Artist: Kiddus I



MODSQUAD

Early '70s
Owned By Billy Dyce (The Tennors).
Artists Include: Bernard Harvey



TUFFTONE

Mid '70s
Artist: Winston McAnuff



HARRY J

Early '70s
Artists include: Bob Andy, Harry J All-Stars, Bob &
Marcia, Bobby Lawrence, Bill Walker, Heptones



JACKPOT

Mid '70s
Owned by Bunny Lee. Artists include: Horace Andy,
Johnny Clarke, Leroy Smart, Linval Thompson



ACETONE LABEL

Mid '70s
Owned by Hubert "Prince" Cunningham (reputably).
Artists include: Jah Massa, Mighty Tides



OBSERVER

1970s
Owned by Niney the Observer. Artists Include:
Dennis Brown, Cornell Campbell, Ansell Collins,
Niney All-Stars, Horace Andy



SMILE JAMAICA/TUFF GONG

1976
"Smile Jamaica" song title and Tuff Gong
"subsidiary" bear the same name.



DR. KOMINA

Late '70s
Artists include: Rolston Daly, King Flowers,
Stanley & The Turbines



ISLAM

1960s
Owned by Prince Buster. Artists Include: Higgs &
Wilson, Joe Higgs, Prince Buster



SANTIC

Early '70s
Owned by Leonard "Santic" Chin. Artists Include:
Carrol Thompson, Paul White, Erica Gale,
Bim Sherman, Augustus Pablo, Horace Andy, I Roy



AUGUSTUS BUCHANAN

1970s
Owned by Big Youth. Artist: Big Youth



MUMMY

Late '60s/'70s
Artists Include: Keble Drummond, Donovan Adams,
The Mercenaries, Prince Mohammed, The Gaylads,
Trinity



PRESSURE BEAT

Early '70s
Owned by Joe Gibbs. Artists Include: Peter Tosh,
Winston Wright, Dennis Alcapone, Johnnie Lover,
Dennis Brown, The Soul Mates



TOP CAT

1970s
Artists Include: The Jamaicans, Charley Ace,
Black Uhuru



ROCKET
Mid '80s
Artist: Little Twitch



INVADER
1973-1975
Owned by The Invaders. Artist: The Invaders



DANCE HALL RECORDS
1980s
Artists Include: Lee Van Cliff, Winston Morris & Tony Tuff, Errol Scorchor, The Revolutionaries



56 HOPE ROAD
1980s
Artists Include: Iya Creeks, Horace Andy, His Lonliness, Tappa Zukie, I Threes, Oku "Fire" Onuora
Note: This was the address for Bob Marley's home, currently the Bob Marley museum.



UPRI-SING
1978
Artist: Advocates Aggregation



THE GOOD SAMARITAN
Late '70s
Artist: Walyn Rickets



POWERSTONE
Mid '80s
Noel Davey



LUSCIOUS
1980s
Artist: General Trees



SCORPIO
Late '70s
Owned by Bim Sherman. Artists include: Jah Stone, Bim Sherman, Sounds Unlimited, U Brown



MUSICAL FIGHT AT PINK LANE
1975
Artist: Eric Clarke



GOD SENT
Late '70s
Owned by "Prince Lincoln" Thompson
Artist: Prince Lincoln & Royal Rasses



TUFF GONG
Mid '70s
Owned by the original Wailers (Tosh, Marley, Bunny). Artists include all of the above and: Judy Mowatt, Steel Pulse, Sister Carol, Mighty Diamonds, Lee Perry, Nadine Sutherland, Bob Andy, I Roy



LIBRA RECORDS
1970s
Artists Include: Philip Frazier, Prince Pampadoc, King Tubby



AQUARIUS
Early '70s
Owned by Herman "Chin" Loy. Artists Include: Augustus Pablo, Alton Ellis, Dennis Brown, The Heptones



CANCER
Mid '70s
Artists Include: Carl Dawkins, Dillinger, U Brown, The Heptones, Carl Malcom, Tinga Stewart, Cables



MOSES
1970s
Artists Include: Ken Boothe, Tabby Diamond and the Heptones, Niney the Observer



PRIESTHOOD
Early '80s
Artist: Freddie McGregor



THE TRUTH
Early '70s
Owned by Max Romeo. Artists include: Max Romeo, Sticky & Family Man, Johnny Stud (a.k.a. Max Romeo)



SURVIVAL
1977
Artist: Symbol



LOVE
Late '70s
Artists Include: Gregory Isaacs, I Roy, General Roy, Errol Dunkley



HUMMING BIRD
1980s
Artist: Tenor Saw



PUSSYCAT
1960s
Artist: Vic Taylor



EEK-A-MOUSE
Mid '70s
Owned By Eek-A-Mouse. Artist: Eek-A-Mouse



BLACK RAM
Mid '70s
Artists: Al Moodie, Black Ram & Dynamics



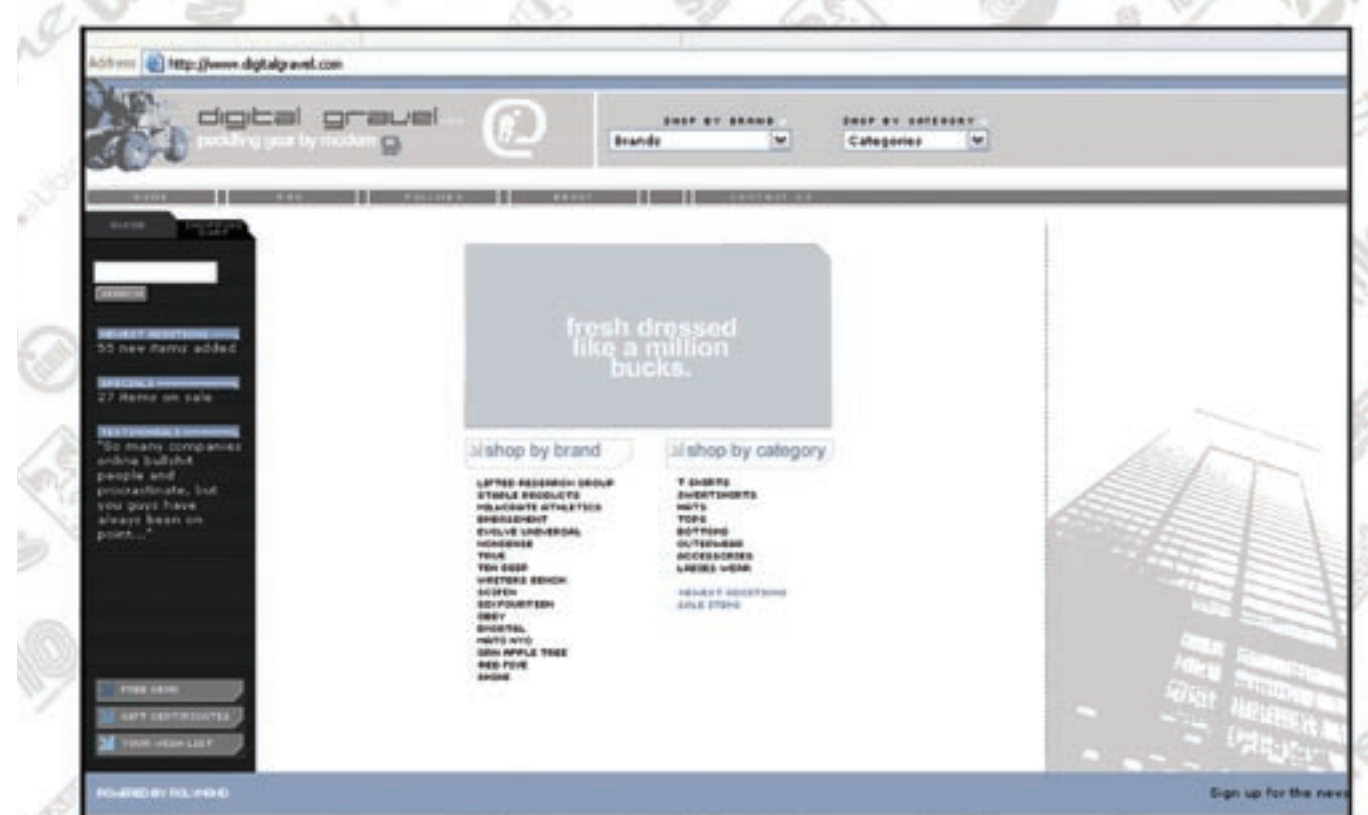
LORD KOOS
Late '60s to early '70s
Artists Include: Carlton Livingston, Cecil B, Errol Dunkley, Michael White, Maytones, Delroy Wilson, Alton Ellis, Tappa Zukie, Johnny Clarke



YARD MUSIC
Mid '70s
Artists Include: Rockers All Stars (Augustus Pablo & Jacob Miller), Soul Power & Sound, Larry White, Chester McBean



PEACEFUL ROAD
Mid '70s
Artists Include: Underground People, The Uniques, Errol Carter



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Simon, Tufftone/Dub Shack



Clue to Kalo - Come Here When You Sleepwalk

Clue to Kalo lends credence to the theory that electronica is the new indie. - DJ

An introspective companion piece to the barnstorming Manitoba album. - **UNCUT**

Like Slowdive and Boards of Canada jamming together in Central Park. - **URB**



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MUSH RECORDS

CURSEOV DIALECT
(LOST IN THE REAL SKY)



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MUSH RECORDS

AWOL ONE AMI IAHY KAY
SIANGUAGA

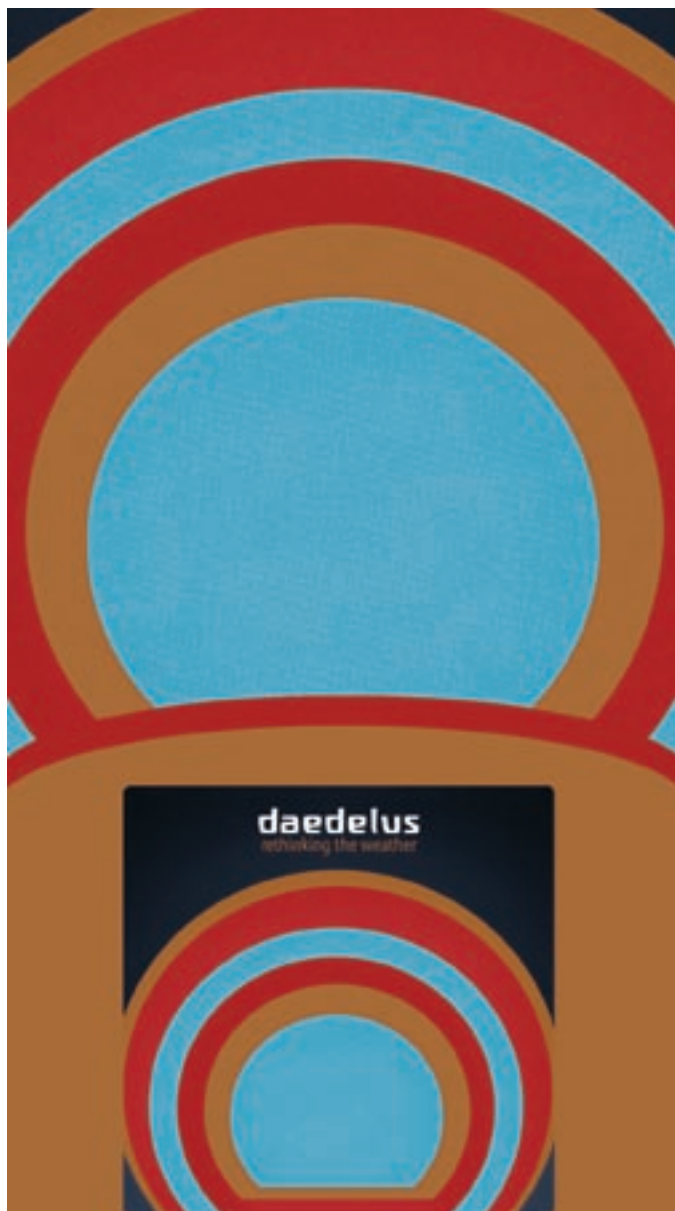
"A MASSIVE LEAD FORWARD."
MUZIK

"ONE OF RAP'S MOST ORIGINAL VOICES."
SPIN



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MUSH RECORDS



daedelus
rethinking the weather

Using the instrumentals from his Mush collaboration with Busdriver and Radioinactive as a base, Daedelus has chopped, relayed, remixed, twisted, and given life to a new instrumental project dubbed "Rethinking The Weather". Fans of the original should take note that this is not your typical hiphop instrumental album. Although the original was used as a starting point, the end result is something entirely unique and a glimpse into the mind of a one-of-a-kind artist.



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XL REVIEWS 07.03



MONOBOX MOLECULE
Logistic/FRA/CD

No longer is it reasonable to suppose that history unfolds as narratives of "great men" and "great events." Nevertheless, for those living it, history is, as Chaucer put it, "the smiler with the dagger beneath the cloak." In the fabled and often inaccurate stories of Detroit during its late 20th-century technological renaissance, Robert Hood's name is everywhere. But it remains a mystery as to why his name is absent from so many accounts of the minimalist strand in contemporary techno and house. He effectively invented the analog strain of minimalism in 1994 on his breathtaking "Minimal Nation," recorded for Jeff Mills's Axis label. He's a barely acknowledged but major influence on everyone from Basic Channel's Mark Ernestus and Moritz von Oswald to Force Inc's Vladislav Delay and Akufen.

Hood continues to leave his peers and loyal fans holding their breath for his new records. His latest full-length for the French label Logistic (for whom he did his first mix CD,

among other projects over the past two years) is one of his best. Alongside the prescient *Minimal Nation* album (Axis, 1994) and *Nighttime World* (Cheap, 1995), *Molecule* follows a perfectly executed flight path. It's almost a concept album insofar as certain threads run through all the tracks, from the opening bolt, "The Construct," through the blinding ice floes of "The Diamond Age." Hood's ability to create a sense of space and tension with a minimum of equipment is stunning. He's always shunned buying new gear and software, and eschewed sampling altogether. Yet, he creates cavernous, beautiful earthscapes that rumble like an oncoming tsunami. Too often, Hood's considered a mere accessory to Jeff Mills. Yet their work is only superficially similar. Hood's exquisite sense of melody—which he hides inside the tracks like a timer device set to detonate at the last second—still shocks me.

Hood's mastery of a few instruments and consistent ability to wring from them new sounds also makes his music by turns subtle and powerful. On *Molecule*, he's brought his wholly original techniques into the light. *Tim Haslett*

Manissa Kaiser



LIFESAVAS SPIRIT IN STONE *Quannum Projects/US/CD*

As the name implies, Lifesavas have a distinctly redemptive vision of hip-hop: they're out to save us from the bran-muffin beats and wack rhymes that have cartwheeled other rappers to mass popularity. *Spirit In Stone* has the glib, convincingly rankled tone of Mr. Lif's *I, Phantom*—though Lifesavas's lyrics are less recondite than Lif's—and the instrumental panache of Solesides' *Greatest Bumps*. MCs Vursatyl and Jumbo the Garbage Man know how to chop it up, whether they're cracking about MC egos ("HelloHiHey") or exhorting fans to fuck the system in every way possible ("Resist"). Musically, Lifesavas venture from crisp, funky boom-bap on the opening track, "Soldierified," to nimble jazz harmonies on "State of the World/Apocalypse/War;" DJ Reverend Shine's breaks veer from straight-no-chaser ("What If It's True?") to totally tripped-out ("Head Exercise"). In the end, *Spirit in Stone* is a meaty album for Lifesavas to cut their teeth on. *Rachel Swan*

A GRAPE DOPE MISSING DRAGONS EP

Galaxia/US/CD

Even more than fellow Tortoise drummer John McEntire, John Herndon has been a key player in Chicago's bustling post-rock/electronic-jazz scenes. Going solo as A Grape Dope, Herndon flexes his precise programming and quirky percussion chops to excitingly diverse effect over this EP's six tracks. "Action: Showered Us" splutters out of the gate like a sloshed Squarepusher rupturing out-jazz and drill & bass, while "Red Hot Attack" (with Anticon's Doseone) puts odd Windy City torque to Dirty South hip-hop. Elsewhere, AGD embraces slow-burning digital soul, Microstoriae-esque reveries, happy-go-lucky future funk, and a bizarrely tranquil East Asian folk/IDM hybrid. *Dave Segal*

OREN AMBARCHI, GÜNTER MÜLLER, VOICE CRACK OYSTERED

Audiosphere/BEL/CD

This latest installation in Audiosphere's excellent *Invisible Architecture* series is perhaps the most compelling to date. That the teaming of guitarist Oren Ambarchi, percussionist and MD-master Günter Müller, and cracked electronics virtuosos Voice Crack (Andy Guhl) and Norbert Moslang) would yield such stellar results should come as no surprise. After all, as three-quarters of Poire_Z, Müller, Guhl and Moslang are a tried-and-true combination. The fusion of Guhl and Moslang's strategically placed buzzes, hums and squeals with Müller's soft, padding percussion is always a potent, elegantly abrasive mix. The addition of Ambarchi's intricate guitar drones tempers the trio's heady sound just slightly, without sacrificing any of its crackling intensity—or, indeed, its pearly evanescence. *Susanna Balle*

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE HERE COMES THE INDIAN

Paw Tracks/US/CD

To balance the weight of technological artificiality on a single blade of grass is to achieve some great, transcendent understanding of modernity. And to gain this understanding is to unlock the mysticism of Animal Collective's latest album. Although seemingly noisy and covered with grime and grease, the tracks that appear on *Here Comes the Indian* originate in droning tones, tribal chants and the forest rock of the UK circa 1970. Buzzing, bubbling, sucking and squeaking, these jams do for the ears what a few mushroom caps will do for the eyes. *Matt Eberhart*

BLACK PANTHER THE DARKEST NIGHT EVER!

Third Earth Music/US/CD

A longtime DJ and mixtape maestro hailing from Brooklyn's Fort Greene district, Black Panther has made a name for himself through radio work, shows with hip-hop crew The Ancients, and a series of dope compilations. For his latest project, BP enlists a team of NYC underground all-stars, who bring the lyrical fury over 17 Panther-produced selections. Third Earth fam members Kimani and Mr. Khalil both appear, as does the inimitable Jean Grae. The mighty Stronghold posse is in full effect, and we also get treats from Murs, Oktober and E-Dot. Raw hip-hop from some of New York's finest. *Brolin Winning*

GLENN BRANCA THE ASCENSION

Acute/US/CD

The '80s revival shouldn't be seen as entirely shallow and insipid. With the renewed interest in all things No Wave, releases such as this offer the more potent Jekyll to electroclash's innocuous Hyde. Best known for linking up Sonic Youth anti-guitarists Lee Ranaldo and Thurston Moore (only Ranaldo is present in this five-guitar lineup), Glenn Branca's own small guitar arsenals have become the stuff of legend. If these recordings pale in comparison to the live experience, the ecstatic drone of "Light Field (In Consonance)" and "Ascension," the Delta 5-like funk drone of "Lesson No.2" and the theatrical histrionics of "The Spectacular Commodity" are no less rapturous for it. Essential. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

BROKER/DEALER FIRST PUBLIC OFFERING

Asphodel/US/CD

San Francisco's Broker/Dealer have quietly done their own thing for some time now, overshadowed by the Bay Area's better-known laptop stars. Best known for their releases on Cologne's Traum Schallplatten, *First Public Offering* sees Ryan Fitzgerald and Ryan Bishop combining the pop underpinnings of Giorgio Moroder, the tech-dub styling of Basic Channel and Force Inc, and the ambient wash of Kompakt in a way all their own. If it's not a reinvention of the techno wheel, it's certainly one of the most enjoyable minimal techno full-lengths we've heard in recent memory. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

CAIA THE MAGIC DRAGON

The Dining Rooms TRE

Guidance/CD/US

By now it's common to hear downtempo backing a TV cop-show montage or an NPR documentary. Mellow (but not too mellow) and above all *tasteful* music has become the soundtrack to our mediated lives. Caia (Japanese musician Maiku Takahashi, produced by Groove Armada's Andy Cato) and The Dining Rooms (Italians Stefano Ghittoni and Cesare Malfatti) craft engaging, but ultimately safe music that's ideal for soundtracks. *The Magic Dragon* is a construction of beat loops, vocal snippets and string-laden atmospheres recalling the mid-'90s heyday of Pork and ambient dub. *Tre* takes a more cinematic view, mixing up tempos and adding a more Mediterranean vibe, with vocal tracks by Anna Clementi (of Tosca) and Sean Martin. Both provide impeccably easy listening. *Joe Rice*



WARD CHURCHILL PACIFISM AND MYTHOLOGY IN THE AMERICAN LEFT
CHRISTIAN PARENTI TAKING LIBERTIES: PRISONS, POLICING AND SURVEILLANCE IN AN AGE OF CRISIS

Alternative Tentacles/US/CD

In a lecture/Q&A format, Churchill critiques pacifism as a liberal protest technique and finds it wanting. Vigils and petitions don't effect real change, says Churchill, and accordingly only reinforce the corrupt and violent systems they claim to protest. The Parenti album, in contrast, was recorded at several events, and tackles various topics: manipulative treatment of the poor by capitalist systems, civil rights and illegal disobedience, the scarily broad government powers granted by the USA Patriot Act, and political maneuvering and repression. Churchill assumes more, Parenti explains more, but both raise powerful questions about the future of global freedom. *Luciana Lopez*

TOM CLARK KING TIDE

Morris Audio/GER/CD

German DJ/producer Tom Clark has started three record labels (the now-defunct Gold Plate Music, Highgrade Records, and Laufwerk Musik) while producing for other imprints like Poker Flat, Rampe D and SuperBra, and maintaining a residency at Berlin's famed Tresor club. Clark's debut album offers solid minimal tech-house that flows from organic textures, although tracks like "Flying Carpet" move smoothly and somewhat uninterestingly without really going anywhere. Other cuts, like "Slip Out," show Clark's talent for minimal composition by carving an entire track from a single piano note and deep rhythms. Like MRI with less sophisticated song structure. *Janet Tzou*

ALEX CORTEX INWARD CTRL

Ann Aimee/NETH/CD

Listening to *Inward CTRL* is like ordering tapas. With 24 untitled tracks averaging about three minutes apiece, the first full-length on Ann Aimee is strangely fulfilling. Bit-hop percolates from track three, an artfully incomplete bassline supports track five—Germany's Alex Cortex has a delicacy for each of us. The temptation with his format would be to push the abstract, but for the most part, Cortex assumes there is a dancefloor under his feet. His ability to match euphoria with restraint makes *Inward CTRL* irresistible. *Dan Sicks*

DAKAH HIP-HOP ORCHESTRA UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

Rhythm Room/US/CD

Dakah lays down the gauntlet for those "producers" who recycle samples, nudge already-hackneyed beats and call the result "hip-hop." The LA-based 60-plus piece orchestra shows the difference live musicians can make on tracks like "Adiago Asiago" (subtitled "Tryin II Sow My Love"), a love song where swelling woodwinds are grounded with unhurried percussion. Another standout is "Invocation of the Duke," where the scratching lets the Latin percussion and string- and horn-laden instrumentation take the foreground. Minor quibble: sometimes the instruments overwhelm the sung and rapped vocals. But overall, *Unfinished Symphony* is outstanding and hopefully indicative of more to come. *Luciana Lopez*

DEADLY AVENGER DEEP RED

Illicit/Shadow/US/CD

What do Big Beat producers do when their genre becomes history? Some naturally try film scoring. Damon Baxter shows he's serious about soundtracking on *Deep Red*—a 47-piece Hungarian orchestra can't be cheap. Despite Baxter's grandiose ambitions and innate funkiness, *Deep Red* comes off more as pastiche than inspired creation. Virtually every gesture here sounds overly familiar. The 13-track disc takes a nosedive in quality after the fourth cut, overdosing on pompous, melancholy strings and turgid "exoticism." It's cool to pay homage to composers like Schifrin, Hayes, Oldfield, Morricone and Quincy Jones, but some originality wouldn't hurt. *Dave Segal*

PATRICK DUBOIS TODAY

Isoghi/SPN/CD

Daniel Erbe's got one hell of an alter-ego. As Patrick Dubois, he creates luscious, minimal techno with a warm, fuzzy center. The bulk of the tunes on *Today* are heady, atmospheric tracks that throb with emotion and pulsate with an earnestness all too often suppressed in today's more clinical techno works. Erbe's tracks like "Run," "My Cat" and "Sofa" resonate with the gentle, fragile beauty championed by minimal machine-music artists like Norken and Brothomstates. He sends up a dark homage to the '80s with the unexpectedly tender android melodica of "Open Air," and even his interpretation of modern house gets an ethereal touch on "Sushi Bar." An arresting listen from beginning to end—Erbe has pulled off a surprisingly captivating tearjerker. *Christine Hsieh*

DUB TRACTOR MORE OR LESS MONO

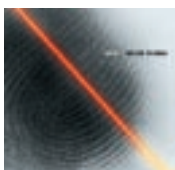
City Centre Offices/GER/CD

With *More Or Less Mono*, Dub Tractor (a.k.a. Anders Remmer of Future 3 fame) pulls off a compelling and surprisingly delicate fusion of minimal techno, experimental glitch and heartbreaking melodies, all with a distinctively effortless air. Remmer sticks to an intriguing formula of snarled drum loops, random machine noise and sharp crackles, all wrapped up in hazy synths, dubbed-out effects and acoustic instrumentals. But he also exhibits an admirable sense of restraint. Tracks like "Hum (Part 4)" (which combines wistful vocals with a lazy guitar line and dreamy reverb) and "I Don't Care" (a marvelous piece of space-age machine music) breathe with life and emotional depth, making this album an absorbing listen from beginning to end. *Christine Hsieh*

MATT ELLIOTT THE MESS WE MADE

Domino/UK/CD

Revealing a fondness for drifting in and out of sleep that he shares with My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields, Matt Elliott claims that most of his ideas are derived from hypnogogic or hypnopompic conditions—respectively, the partially conscious states of drowsiness experienced before sleeping or awakening. From this somnolence, Elliott crafts the most beautiful but unnerving recordings. For the most part eschewing the clattering breakbeats of his previous Third Eye Foundation project in favor of mournful and warped chamber music, Elliott frequently deploys his own eerily stretched and indistinct vocals. This decision to foreground his own voice-self may explain why Elliott has chosen to release music under his own name rather than exhume his former alter-ego. *David Hemingway*



ESEM SERIAL HUMAN

M3rck/US/CD

Taking their pursuit of "severely electrified hip-hop" global, Miami's Merck drafts Bulgaria's Esem for a dark ride through a mountainous amalgam of shimmering electronics and murky splatters of broken beatdowns. Unfortunately, *Serial Human* isn't totally free from the usual problems that plague IDM artist albums; the good songs are truly great, while some of the others are just fine. "Tjicli" sprightly bounces along, layering more and more complexities in a blurring hall of mirrors, and sounding completely fresh, while elsewhere, "Bleece" resembles the backing track to *National Geographic Explorer*. In essence, this imperfection indeed makes Esem truly human. *Brian Paul*

EUROPA 51 ABSTRACTIONS

Lo/UK/CD

Europa 51 come round rapping sultrily on your door with one question and one question only: at what point do you go from being influenced by the meandering pastoral postures of Tortoise and the breathy, vocalized foxtrots of Stereolab to sounding like a college dive bar-inhabiting cover band? Or, as displayed on *Abstractions*, a more folksy Gaelic version thereof. Oh yes, there's lots of rootsy hillside instrumentation on parade, finger-picked gui-

tars and violas galore, and girls singing "la-la-la" and "doo-doo-doo." Recommended for those aged 38 and over who wear linen shirts and proudly drink organic coffee. *Brian Paul*

EVOLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE PLAGIARITHM NATION

Seeland/US/CD

The ECC arguably first infected the Net with the "mash-up" technique—still best heard on their classic 1993 "Whipped Cream Mix" of Chuck D rapping over a Herb Alpert big-band jaunt. *Plagiarythm Nation* is an assortment of their MP3 "hits" that sometimes proves that "copyright infringement is your best entertainment value," as Negativland told us. "Rocked by Rape" stitches Dan Rather's depressing headlines over an AC/DC riff, as if he's crooning at a shit-kicker bar. Elsewhere, Janet Jackson and Gloria Estefan hits mutate into oddball ditties that resemble the Residents. Basically, this album is between-song, gag filler for late-night college radio. *Cameron Macdonald*

THE GOSSIP MOVEMENT

Kill Rock Stars/US/CD

Detractors of bitter chick rock will find the Gossip's variant to be a *coup de grace*. Their new album, *Movement*, is hewn from girl angst and geekiness: in other words, it's wedged between Sleater Kinney and the Ramones. But the Gossip gives its forerunners a run for their money: they've balanced catchy handclaps ("Fire/Sign") with gospelly dirges ("All My Days"), and Beth's voice might have been plucked from some coalminer's daughter in a Southern shantytown. The Gossip has a sound that's unlike most garage rock: their songs are as bruising and bluesy as any backporch folk, but appropriately feedback-laced and ardently pissed-off. *Rachel Swan*

H-FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENTS

Soma/SCOT/CD

With *Environments*, Hipp-e and Halo have taken their trademark slubby, West Coast house beats and sharpened them up with a slick, Euro-cool patina and a hefty amount of leftfield influences. From the smart soul vocals on "Soul Searchin'" to the nu-jazz/broken-beat-influenced "Feelini'" and the filtered disco groove of "New Funk Theory," these boys are taking house music for a spin. While the album is far from ground-breaking (the Jazzanova influences are fairly obvious, and many tracks retain a Chicago-style jackin' house feel), it speaks well of H-Foundation's exploration and successful incorporation of more daring musical ideas. *Christine Hsieh*

INCOGNITO WHO NEEDS LOVE

Dome/UK/CD

Perennial jazz-funk pioneers Incognito show they're still full of life with this offering for the symmetrical Dome imprint. As expected, jaw-dropping instrumentation is high on the menu. "Can't Get You Out Of My Head" has nothing to do with an evergreen, large-buttocked Australian popster—it's a strolling, needy, lovesick vocal escapade with gliding orchestral strings and a soul-steeped guitar. "Fly" spreads its wings and ascends heavenward, thanks to visionary keys, a flourishing sax and hip-swinging guitar. It's a shame there aren't many instrumentals here, as the impact of Incognito's music is at times watered down by uncommitted vocals. *Jon Freer*

KPT.MICHI.GAN PLAYER PLAYER

Aesthetics/US/CD

Kpt.michi.gan's second album feels like you're sneaking into an abandoned house, left half-constructed, all flaking and crumbling drywall, haphazard piles of shredded lumber, sparsely lit by a single flashlight beam. *Player Player* features some intensely minimal, yet strangely scattered microelectronics that put cracked, fragmented shards of rather loud noise on display. Kpt. doesn't shy away from evocations of machinery, like with the shallow jackhammering of "Weg 3," but the intriguingly hard emptiness of the album turns suddenly on its head with the final track, "Hey Brother," a pretty, mild idietronic pop number complete with twee male vocals. *Selena Hsu*

ERKKI KURENNIEMI AANITYKSIA/RECORDINGS 1963-1973

Love Records/FIN/CD

Aanityksia offers wildly untamed electronic experiments from the '60s and '70s by this extraordinary Finnish inventor/composer. During his career, Kurenniemi invented a series of incredible electronic synthesizers that used camera images, brain impulses and sexual touching to trigger unique sounds. The tracks range from the horrible torture chamber of "On-Off" to shimmering electronic overtones, Hendrix-esque feedback, tape-collage and subtle Nintendo beats. The music evokes Stockhausen and more experimental Kraftwerk, adding an occasional taste of *Switched On Bach*. This stuff is amazing if you're into weird, experimental groundbreaking synthesis. *Jesse Terry*

KARSH KALE LIBERATION

Bob Holroyd WITHOUT WITHIN

Six Degrees/US/CD

The nice surprise in this pair is the latest effort from Asian Massive poster boy Karsh Kale, whose production skills have obviously matured. *Liberation* draws heavily on traditional Indian rhythms and vocals, but also adds a little flair with '80s style drum-machine flourishes and a less-programmed-more-live feel to the music. Holroyd's effort, on the other hand, seems rushed, and an unmistakably canned tracey sound turns up on a number of tracks—odd considering what he's capable of. The best cuts, though, are trademark Holroyd, full of ghostly voices and well-programmed ethnic-flavored beats. *Matt Fisher*

LACKLUSTER SHOWCASE

Blamstrain ENSI

M3rck/US/CD

Showcase collects Lackluster's singles from 1999 through 2001 into an uninterrupted expanse of shadowy electro dotted with shining synthpop pearls of melody. Darkly chiming and pretty—if a bit outdated—and predating the irony-laden electro explosion, Lackluster's tracks are disarmingly sincere. The track dated "07/10/99" is jaunty and percolating, while "28/06/00" is long and naively lovely. Blamstrain's album, while similarly black and sleek, is far less melodic, full of sharp towers piercing a futuristic skyline and intersecting luminescent grids of traffic. *Ensi* stands in a punchy, combat-ive stance, ready to storm the concrete jungle. *Selena Hsu*

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Michael Schmelling



FANNY PACK SO STYLISTIC

Tommy Boy/US/CD

A stroll through Brooklyn these days belies its reputation as a hotbed for furious creativity as Fabolous's 50-cent commercial rap is about all anyone hears. But even in the bleakest of moments, the blast hits from unexpected angles, threatening to shake up the tedium and conjure up a new Brooklyn. Fanny Pack charmingly replaces gun talk with fun talk, bling with boom. Three girls rap in clear, unassuming Brooklyn-speak about life on the block as big-booty electro bounce straight from the old-school South backs them up. Tunes like the hilarious "Cameltoe" and the self-reflexive "Hey Mami" delight in raw, carefree verses while "Things" takes a familiar melody and runs through all the things a Brooklyn girl loves. Three girls and two guys combine to form a mighty local representation that's as loose as it is unpolished, as new as it is retro, and as welcome as it is brilliant. *Jon Weldon*

GARY MARTIN VIVA LA DIFFERENCE

Exceptional/UK/CD

Detroit-based DJ/producer Gary Martin wisely eschews the four-to-the-floor panic attack in favor of a subtle, nuanced album of floor-filling techno stompers laced with bold brass and synth blips (take "Casa Cugat" and the resonant, percussive insistence of "Cidade Marvilhosa," for instance), stripped-down breakbeat (the oh-so-sexy "Mambo Elektro"), and heart-in-throat, groovy minimal house tunes punctuated by pianos and the occasional vocal sample (check out the freaky goodness of "That's What I'm Talkin Bout"). The album flows marvelously from beginning to end, offering up one odd, tasty electroid confection after another with a rare sense of restraint, a worldly sense of rhythm and a wry sense of humor. *Lovely. Christine Hsieh*

MITCHELL & DEWBURY RAPPIN WITH THE GODS

Mumo/UK/CD

It's hard to be anything but a cynic these days, but somehow Mitchell & Dewbury have managed to rise above the times on this album of uplifting deep jazz. Rolling organs, testifying choruses and fat, sassy basslines are all present and accounted for on epic jams like "Globetrotter," while elsewhere the pair pays much respect to Afro and Latin roots, and nods to disco on the title track. If you can open those jaded ears (and overlook some occasionally heavy-handed lyrics), *Rappin With the Gods* is full of the unified sounds of hope. *Peter Nicholson*

NINA NASTASIA RUN TO RUIN

Touch and Go/US/CD

Approach *Run to Ruin* like a bottle of whiskey on a solitary night on the porch—in slow, successive sips, letting the rich, oaken taste and luxurious loneliness of her dark-waltz country music make themselves known. Nastasia's voice, alternately rough-hewn and sweetly high, is laced with deep languorous string strains. The ominous shimmering shiver in "I Say That I Will Go" is heavy waltz-step builds into a slow-churning dissonance, while her low moan in "You Her And Me" matches up with those of the cello. In "The Body," Nastasia's voice turns through phrases like a leaf touching down briefly on the ground before whisking up and away into an isolated, intense twister. *Selena Hu*

ARNE NORDHEIM DODEKA

Rune Grammofon/NOR/CD

Now in his 70s, the uncompromising Arne Nordheim may be Norway's closest equivalent to Stockhausen. The 12 pieces collected in this beautifully packaged CD—standing out even among Kim Hiorthoy's typically beautiful design work—offer spacious *musique concrete* miniatures from the late '60s/early '70s. Defying the Norwegian trend of the time towards neo-folk classicism, *Dodeka* is strung through with an ambient spirit of hovering tinnitubulation. In this, it comes closest to approximating a music box concerto of fluttering analog seagulls. Rarefied and beguiling. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

OPiate SOMETIMES

Morr Music/GER/CD

Opiate, the solo project of Thomas Knak (a Björk collaborator and also a member of trios System and Future 3), only partially lives up to its moniker. The overall effect of the fuzzy fluctuations on the six-track *Sometimes* EP is sedative, but instead of dulling the senses, it reveals (on repeated close listens) an airy, intricate mesh of textures. Fitting the Morr Music modus operandi, acoustic overlaps form the EP's sun-speckled springboard. But unlike so many post-clicks 'n' cuts/glitch composers, Knak is ever so deliberate. Recalling at times the work of Pole, Pan Sonic and Boards of Canada, the prickly, serene-yet-sinister soundscapes of *Sometimes* aren't sculpted chaos; rather, the tranquil trickles of static stutters and melodic flutters are as regulated as prescription drugs. This Opiate heightens the senses and Knak's craft. *Tony Ware*

KARSTEN PFLUM TRACKS

Worm Interface/UK/CD

Karsten Pflum, a.k.a. Jacob Madsen, hails from Copenhagen. For the release of his debut full-length, however, he teamed with Worm Interface, a downbeat label from London. The significance of this pairing becomes clear upon hearing *Tracks*, a collection of naive-meets-nostalgic melodies and percussive skitter that brings to mind an assemblage of the most appealing elements of the Warp/Gescom/Rephlex/Planet Mu scene. Karsten Pflum's music isn't any more dancefloor-oriented than Squarepusher's, µ-Ziq's or a less brutal Aphex Twin's—the three most directly appropriate comparisons (with a touch of Nobukazu Takemura) for *Tracks*. But since "toytronica" is an even more retarded genre name, "IDM" will suffice. Think dewy drifts and effervescent, plucky synths atop pecking-but-not-pounding drill 'n' bass. *Tony Ware*

PUSH BUTTON OBJECTS GHETTO BLASTER

Chocolate Industries/US/2XLP

As his album title suggests, Push Button Objects makes "glitch-hop" by having his hip-hop blared over by competing boomboxes on the playground. His latest joint is divided between a variety show of who's-who in indie rap, and abstract beat explorations tagged with noise bursts. Things pick up midway with "Air," featuring beats that slam like a strait-jacketed uncle in the attic, and "Sleep," which scratches an MC's voice into that of an eight-headed jabberwocky. *Ghetto Blaster* finally sobers up at "Washington Ave," a space-out with DJ Shadow-esque scope, before UFOs arrive to end the world. *Werd! Cameron Macdonald*



BONOBO
DIAL 'M' FOR MONKEY
Ninja Tune/UK/CD
 Keep it simple, stupid. Bonobo, a.k.a. Simon Green, is one of the few electronic producers to heed that annoying yet sage advice, and the result is a warm, beautifully crafted follow-up to his 2001 debut, *Animal Magic*. The sonic territory covered here is much the same, with delicate guitars and the occasional sitar nes-tled next to plucky basslines and crisp drum work. Yet Green's sophomore effort shows a maturing sense of song structure. The tracks are still loop-based, but cuts like "Change Down" and "Wayward Bob" shine with careful addition and subtraction, their basic elements factoring together to become a more significant whole. At a concise 40 minutes, *Dial 'M' For Monkey* doesn't overstay its welcome, feeling like the aural equivalent of a good friend's briefly shared secret dream. *Peter Nicholson*



ANGIE REED PRESENTS THE BEST OF BARBARA BROCKHAUS

Tobias Schmidt

HOORAY FOR EVERYTHING

DiskoB-Chicks on Speed/GER/CD

If Peaches is a goddess, then Angie Reed is a secretary with an insane sense of humor and libido. She is overworked, underappreciated and baffled by the male gender. On "No Pony," she tells us that she's "sad and lonely and never had a pony." But Barbara's no doormat, as "I Don't Do Dirty Work, Sucka" testifies. "Disco Club" recalls a night of headaches, vomiting and passing out. On "Habibi," she visits a harem, becoming the chosen concubine. All this over electro beats that lapse into rock and country inflections. Tobias Schmidt checks in with an 11-tracker of machine funk that falls somewhere between Munich and Detroit. Electro prevails on powerhouse groovers like "Jump to Start" or "Dr. What," but Schmidt really shines on his covers of Throbbing Gristle's "Hot On the Heels of Love" and the Delfonics' "Ready or Not (Here I Come)." Techno and electro types will not be disappointed, and IDM sorts will glean pleasure from this album too. *Chris Orr*

FIONA RENSHAW LOVE IN A BUBBLE

Laws of Motion-Sirkus/UK/CD

With a hot-asphalt delivery that sounds like she could be the offspring of Janis Joplin and Joe Cocker, Fiona Renshaw spins tales of mourned love and unrequited desire that range from quiet lament to palpable anger. "Through the Day" stands out, as Renshaw's cloudy river of a voice is offset by plaintive, soulful synth lines in one of the few tracks that don't follow a strictly acoustic blueprint (is this what broken folk sounds like?). Johnny Cole's production wisely stays out of her way, with strings and oboe providing effective counterpoint, throwing a mosaic of shadows, and only occasionally (as on "Kiss Me") becoming too overwrought. *Joe Rice*

RIMA THIS WORLD

JCR/GER/CD

Capable of the most abstract, contorting broken beat rhythms as well as straightforward-yet-immensely-soulful house music, Dominic Stanton (who produces as Domu) is currently at the top of his game. Teaming up with Enrico Crivellero (a.k.a. Volcov) as Rima, Stanton drops a luscious full-length sitting between those two extremes, with jazz fusion playing a major role. Silky vocals backed with mashed-up production meet angular broken beats, and the album drips with live performances from luminaries like Kaidi Tatham and Ian O'Brien; tracks are steeped in the Chicago/Detroit/London tradition. Whether accessible or recon-dite, *This World* sounds like a great place to live. *Mike Battaglia*

ULRICH SCHNAUSS A STRANGELY ISOLATED PLACE

City Centre Offices/UK/CD

Ulrich Schnauss finds virtue in prettiness and early-'90s dream pop. With track titles like "Gone Forever" and "On My Own," this follow-up to his widely revered *Far Away Trains Passing By* is presumably intended to tug at the heart strings rather than the feet, and kindle particular emotional responses—specifically a sense of loss, longing and loneliness. Yet, like many of the artists to whom the Berlin-based producer can be justly compared (Slowdive, Chapterhouse, Bang Bang Machine), Schnauss creates pleasant music that is curiously blank and weirdly unevocative. *A Strangely Isolated Place* is a palimpsest on which to impose your own personal circumstance. *David Hemingway*

SKATALITES FROM PARIS WITH LOVE

World Village/US/CD

Bounce, bounce! Groovin' to the Skatalites's latest release is like taking a water break from our war-torn world in the warm surf. And even if the band's cast of characters feels like it's in never-ending rotation (Lester Sterling, Lloyd Brevett, Lloyd Knibb, Doreen Shaffer and Dizzy Moore are the original members returning for this go around), its singular ska-jazz sound seems to be working just fine here. Standout tracks include the mellow-but-potent "Glory to the Sound"—a tune Dizzy claims was once an apartheid protest song named "Letter to Botha"—and "When I Fall in Love," which show-cases Shaffer's smooth-as-cocoa-butter vocals. The Skatalities's skin-tight horn interplay has lost none of its swing; the disc is just one extended riddim that doesn't end until around the 60-minute mark. If your ass is sitting still while this joint is in the drive, then there is something seriously wrong with you. *Scott Thill*

SMOOTH

Real Estate/US/CD

Cram Everything But The Girl, Morcheeba and Portishead into a blender, and you get the endearing, but somewhat derivative, Smooth. This Israeli band does a fine job of creating bleepy electronic soundscapes full of free-wheeling guitar work, shimmering synth lines and meandering melodies, but the end result is hardly captivat-ing. "All Those Feelings" is a lovely piece of post-Radiohead rock and "Fill It Up" fits right into a dark, Generation X-directed TV police drama soundtrack. But the vocal theatrics and intense melodrama begin to wear a bit thin. *Christine Hsieh*

SPLINTER GROUP BLOWING DOWN BLUE SKY

W.D.T.H.C./US/CD

While I'm about as technologically masterful as a toddler with a push toy, I embrace, and am schooled in, theories of improvisation and experimentation. Which is frustrating when I enjoy artists like Splinter Group, yet have no idea how they created such intricate sound exploration. Basically, the process involved two members selecting beats to be programmed by engineer Wayne Peet, which were then fed back to the group to expand on as they envisioned. Each piece—anchored by Kaoru on vocals—is a marvel, building layer upon layer of sound to create a harmonious whole. *Margaret Murray*

STRAND MESSAGES

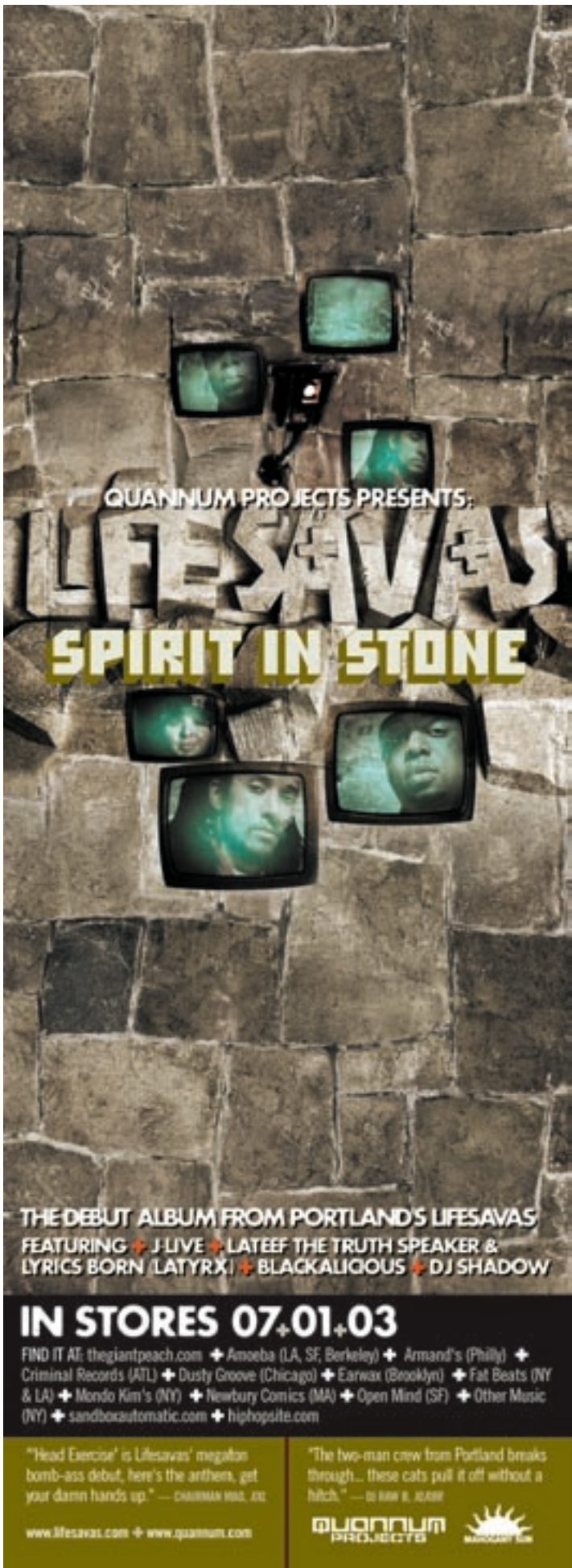
Delsin/NETH/CD

Outside of the great celebrated triumvirate of Atkins, Saunderson and May, Detroit has dozens of journeymen waiting to be discovered. The trio called Strand is no exception. Eschewing the formulaic approach, their first full-length album is full of intricacies and quirks, but remains a very smooth production. "Vamp" is an excellent example, swinging a nerdy, harpsichord-like sound and '80s bass around in modern staccato construct. It's evidence that the new wave influence is still working itself out in fascinating ways. *Messages* is a microcosm of everything that's right with Detroit techno. *Dan Sicks*

STRATEGY STRUT

Outward Music Co/US/CD

You'd think that with a title like *Strut*, Strategy's debut would be bursting with big swaggering sounds. Instead, Strategy's point of pride seems to be in his wide palette of rather small though stylist-ly melded beats. "Fuck It, Baby" is tiny, kinky dance music—IDM for toy soldiers—and "Splash" starts out with sweet patterned beats that get rubbed away by light swipes of sandpaper. "Delicious" builds into a muted, watery reverb, an amniotic lullaby similar in tone to "The Sea Is So Cold." From the budding Portland experimental electronic scene, Strategy shouts proud. *Selena Hu*



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SUPREMEEX NUN TYPE

Hiero Imperium/US/CD

While the dialogue samples on this album will give you an idea of the issues being touched on—magic, technology, and their intersections and oppositions—the music itself pushes the theme forward even more. Take “Destruction”: the pounding drums conjure images of machines at work, raucously efficient, while the melodic samples give the rhythm an ethereal feel. The overall effect is aggressive but spiritual. For vocals, Tajai of Souls of Mischief swings through to drop some very impressive rhymes, and Goapele lends her pipes to a chorus as well. Perhaps most importantly, SupremeEx doesn’t explore his theme at the expense of listenability. *Pete Babb*



SWAMBURGER THE ROOTS OF KIN

Eight Dimension/US/CD

From the beat quality all the way up to the lyrics and delivery, this is a top-notch album. You could tell Swamburger was up for good things after his guest spot with BMF and Beef Wellington of Orlando’s Eighth Dimension crew. *The Roots of Kin* seals the deal. Conscious rhymes and a quick delivery bring to mind groups like Binary Star, Zion-I, Digable Planets and early De La Soul, while Swam occasionally picks up the speed to rolling Outkast flavor. Funky guitars dominate the beats, which hint at an experimental electronic style. When’s the last time a hip-hop album turned that frown upside-down? *Jesse Terry*

JOHN TEJADA & ARIAN LEVISTE FANFARE SAKE

Playhouse/GER/CD

This may be the first Tejada release to bear both its creators’ names (Tejada and Leviste have been musical partners for eons), but it’s not indicative of any substantial stylistic change. *Fanfare Sake* is prime Tejada techno-punchy beats with a finely measured dose of house funk—if a bit updated for the Playhouse crew. The lead-off track, “Faux Obsolete,” is representative of *Fanfare Sake*’s remarkable style—warm, yet staccato synth chords and hefty basslines that carry the song forward, all wrapped in a pristinely echoed mixdown. Playhouse should feel honored to have such a fine record in their catalog. *Heath K. Hignight*

TELEDUBGNOSIS MAGNETIC LEARNING CENTER

Wordsound/US/CD

Dub originated in Jamaica, but its addictive skank captures ears and hearts all over the globe. Broken down thusly, “tele” means far, “dub” stands for sound, and “gnosis” equals truth. Drummer Ted Parsons (Prong, Foetus) and pals take dub to far-flung reaches of noise, electronics, and idealism. The Teledubgnosis core includes programmer extraordinaire Jason Wolford (of Decadent Dub Team—the Texas Tackhead), multi-instrumentalist/media artist Gregory Damien Grinnell, and former Pere Ubu bassist Tony Maimone. *Magnetic Learning* features as many tracks as there are contributors: guitarists Norman Westberg (The Swans, Foetus) and Kurt Wolf (Pussy Galore, Boss Hogg), percussionist George Javori

(Firewater), and bassists Jason Asnes (Crown Heights, Nice Strong Arm) and Dave Sims (Jesus Lizard). Dub is a family affair, and two bonus remixes grace the album: “In Heaven, A Devil” by The Bug (Kevin Martin) and “80 Creeps” by Tech Level 2 (Godflesh’s Justin Broaderrick). School is in session! *Stacy Meyn*

THE GAS MAN REMEDIAL

Planet Mu/UK/CD

Christopher Adam Reeves (a.k.a. The Gasman) apparently derives his recordings from cut-up old classical reel-to-reel tapes which he further mutates via a cheap PC. Around half his tracks have precedents in late-’80s/early-’90s rave, but *Remedial* particularly intrigues when The Gasman’s music-making process produces ghostly aberrations not dissimilar to the reprocessed 1930s ball-room music on The Caretaker’s *Selected Memories From The Haunted Ballroom*. With their warped, lingering trace-memories of the original sound-sources, these dense, neo-classical pieces have a strange and eerie potency. Why Reeves names tracks after a chemical treatment for head lice, a pre-colonoscopy bowel-cleansing preparation, and an abnormal duct from an abscess isn’t, however, immediately apparent. *David Hemingway*

THE MODERNIST KANGMEI

Wander/GER/CD

Picking a good Jorg Burger project can be as challenging as smoking pork ribs. Burger—who records as The Modernist, The Bionaut, et al—tends to marry juicy Cologne techno melodies (à la D.Diggler or Basic Channel) with strong guitar accents, which requires special attention when mixed together. Sometimes the musical meat gets overcooked and dry, as on the last Modernist album, 2000’s micro-house-inspired *Explosion*. Other times, it’s a bland IDM affair like The Bionaut’s *Lubricate Your Living-room*, which, while full of fine melodies, falls flat due to dull Boards of Canada-styled engineering. But sometimes Burger is right on the money, as with *Kangmei*. True succulence is a thing rarely achieved in pork ribs or music, but—like Burger’s 1996 collaboration with Mike Ink, *Las Vegas—Kangmei* strikes the perfect balance of wistful synth melodies with a dash of brooding ambience. The ribald house bass of “A Goldberg Violation” sizzles underneath a conservative synth melody; “Kodac Moments” bursts with rich bell tones and a plucky Black Dog rhythm. *Kangmei* stands out via the vocal element on “Kangmei Pt.1 & 2” and “Protest Song,” both of which offer delicate combinations of electronic pop overtones and strident Cologne techno aesthetics. The only thing lacking on *Kangmei* is a good dipping sauce. *Heath K. Hignight*

THE SOFT PINK TRUTH DO YOU PARTY?

Soundlike/UK/CD

Drew Daniel was the first “glam skater” I ever saw in SF. The Matmos member was decked out in a *Thrasher* shirt, acid-washed jacket, ripped stockings, and checkered lowtops with his face smeared with hot-pink mascara. This juxtaposition of urban grit and discount-store beauty abounds in his microhouse incarnation The Soft Pink Truth. With his hacked-up snares, ditzy electro-funk melodies and divas reduced to stuttering androids, Drew eliminates the need for elec-

troclash. Granted, his sound is way too art-damaged for most dance-floors and homecoming nights, but it’s hard not to smile as you listen, whether it be of delight or bewilderment. *Cameron Macdonald*

THIRD WORLD AIN’T GIVIN’ UP

Shanachie/US/CD

MORGAN HERITAGE THREE IN ONE

VP Records/US/CD

Celebrating 30 years in reggae music, Third World’s latest effort attempts to infuse the past into the present—sometimes successfully, sometimes not. “Fire My Desire” takes a dancehall groove with Lady Saw toasts and smooths it out with soulful, R&B-inspired vocals and massive keyboard lines. The album also features guest appearances from Julian Lennon (“Hold Tight”) and Glen Washington (“Rebel Rock Session”). The solid tracks make it worthwhile, but you may find your finger wandering to the skip button occasionally. Denroy Morgan’s progeny in Morgan Heritage also introduce a variety of elements into their approach to reggae. “Jump Around” exemplifies the group’s hybrid formula, with a guest performance from members of punk-pop band Good Charlotte. The song seems a bit uninspired for an upbeat, bouncy track, and the words fall short of any substantial content. More compelling tracks include the positivist “Everything is Still Everything” and the cover of their father’s “What’s Going On,” which laments the state of reggae radio. With nice production qualities throughout, even the weaker tracks sound good, with an excellent blend of voices, players and digital sounds. *Rob Riddle*

UGLY DUCKLING TASTE THE SECRET

Emperor Norton/US/CD

Wow, what a fun record—perhaps the most entertaining and enjoyable release of the year so far. The overall sound and feel of *Taste the Secret* is straight out of the early ’90s (and that’s a good thing). Ugly Duckling don’t use the golden era as mere window dressing—they exemplify it with witty rhymes and dusty production that’s packed with breaks and fills that keep the beats from stagnating. Meanwhile, MCs Andy and Dizzy keep the fun-factor high from beginning to end, kicking skillful and hilarious rhymes. Throw in some thematic skits that would make Prince Paul proud, and you’ve got one solid hip-hop album. *Pete Babb*

DAVID TOOP BLACK CHAMBER

Sub Rosa/BEL/CD

David Toop makes the kind of music you’d expect from someone who recorded for Eno’s Obscure imprint, writes essential books like *Ocean Of Sound*, and contributes to *The Wire*. His aesthetic is uniquely eclectic and exotic, intelligently designed, conceptually rigorous and ambient in the best way. That he’s creating music this challenging (and disturbing) 30 years into his recording career testifies to both his fecund imagination, and to masterly collaborators like Tom Recchion, Lol Coxhill and Terry Day. Toop’s best album since 1996’s *Pink Noir*, *Black Chamber* explores and exploits sound’s molecular structure with a scientist’s acuity and a mystic’s wonder. *Dave Segal*

ULTRA-RED AMNISTIA!

Antipic/US/CD

Amnistia!, Ultra-Red’s recording of an NYC rally for undocumented immigrant workers’ amnesty on May Day 2000, is more likely to be enjoyed by noise fetishists than the blue-collar proletariat. However, it’s still dazzling for reproducing the same intensity that arises between street protestors and riot police. “Amnistia (por Nueva York)” recalls the ambient-Marxists’ Seattle WTO protest mixes, with its microhouse concoction of clicked beats, DSP scrapes and crowd chants. The vibe then darkens with collages of rally speeches that arise from a murk of feedback drones. Overall, UltraRed presents the event as a hallucination rather than a journalistic dispatch. *Cameron Macdonald*

STEWART WALKER LIVE EXTRACTS

Persona/US/CD

Stewart Walker’s departure from his usual isolation-induced compositions may be a function of his recent *Discord* collaboration with Geoff White. While Walker’s past releases have resounded with a divergence from others, *Live Extracts* finds him working within his older, tech-derived frameworks in new ways. Walker lets loose: the truly live sound of the album lends more to booty-whomp than a desire to pore over the meaning of the conceptual title. A tendency towards polyrhythmic overlays streams an amorphous eventfulness through each beat sequence. Walker now bears the mark of collaboration, while remaining just as sacrosanct in his creation. *Sara Jayne Crow*

XELA FOR FROSTY MORNINGS AND SUMMER NIGHTS

Neo Ouija/UK/CD

John Xela does it up right for us old farts—chilled, melodic, complex IDM, as intricately detailed as later Autechre, but with infinitely more groove and soul. Coming in somewhere between Bola and Boards of Canada, Xela’s debut for Metamatics’s prolific imprint teams with spatial effects, textured sounds and emotional atmospheres ranging from icy ambience to warm headnodders with funky and heady beats that would probably sound great with a mushroom smoothie. While a few tracks are less than stellar, the majority of the album is an invigorating, if not uplifting, listen. Jaded ex-raver chillout-room fans, you will love this. *Mike Battaglia*

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MYKA NYNE A WORK IN PROGRESS

M9/US/CD

ACEYALONE LOVE AND HATE

Project Blowed/US/CD

Myka Nyne’s saga continues with *A Work In Progress*, the latest chapter in the Freestyle Fellowship MC’s comeback, which began with the retrospective *Timepiece* a couple of years back. Yet the lady we call inspiration can be a bitch. At times brilliant and at others merely erratic, Microphone Mike seems a little lost in today’s overly commodified era, which has de-emphasized the actual art of rhyming. He seems to recognize this on “This Ain’t The Song,” which addresses his lack of commercial viability, yet he just can’t bring himself to make an entire album of variations on the “Park Bench People” theme. The closest he comes is “Life Is Hard,” which boasts a falsetto that would make Curtis Mayfield smile. But too much ‘dro results in an uneven LP, one which swerves wildly from mellow, leftfield artistry to tired South Central pimpisms. Aceyalone, on the other hand, is probably the most consistent

worker to emerge from the Fellowship shop, and on *Love & Hate*, he mixes solo tracks and Marvel-team-up-style collabos with Casual, El-P, Sayyid and Priest, and Goapele. Acey’s flow is on point as ever on “In Stereo,” a song well worth bopping to, even without a Missy Elliot remix. “Infrared/telescopic/ audio transmit/fiber-optic/the speed of sound/in full surround/a full metal jacket with a new compound/amplified/deep and wide/jump into your ride and lean to the side.” *Eric K. Arnold*

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Horsepower Productions (from left): Matt Levescote, Yannis Small and Ben Garner



DUBSTEP ALLSTARS VOL. 1
Tempa/UK/CD

Just the other day I saw DJ Storm of Metalheadz play at Brooklyn's Halycon Café, a hip little lounge known for its impeccable soundsystem, and was immediately struck: Storm in a lounge-cape? A veteran from one of the roughest drum & bass crews gets to rinse dubplates to hipsters on couches? Barely anyone wanted to dance, and it wasn't cause they weren't hip to Storm. What's going on here? Something's missing.

When I heard *Dubstep Allstars*, a mix-CD of tunes by the small producer clan from the newest mutant genre from London, I realized what's missing—or rather, what's needed. When dub is too lethargic, drum & bass too aggressive, garage too shimmer, and commercial hip-hop too cluttered with dumb vocals, dubstep—around a cool 150 bpm—finds the balance. Twitchy hi-hats and two-step snares are snagged from the vacuous garage/Timbaland ether by the ooziest bass, just when you thought bass could get no more concrete. The result is so solid and visceral that only the subtlest hint of soundboy violence exists. DJ Hacha gathers as well-rounded a group of producers as could be expected in such a young genre, focusing on Benny III, Horsepower, Benga and himself to present a laid-back, danceable journey into the space between.

Running the range of cutty breaks and militant mash-ups, it's the minimal tunes that stand out. Less is more on Benga's "Hacha-dub"—an isolated, rugged break that furiously snaps the ragged bass into place.

Foreshadowing "Hacha-dub," Benga & Skream distort some heavy wah-wah bass reminiscent of hardstep drum & bass moved by heaving snares on "The Judgment!" The largest bass—and that's saying a lot here—rumbles strongest on Benga's "Amber," while Menta's "Rubba" bass lurches from left to psychedelic right. Midway through the mix, a curious flute flutters through several tracks, surreal in its organic isolation, highlighting the strange playfulness of this genre. Hacha closes things with his doom-laden, bombastic "Conga Therapy," as congas bounce between digital crashes.

Dubstep is conspicuously, perhaps blissfully, without chatter. It rolls and feints effortlessly along the rhythms with very occasional samples, going beyond dub in its quiet spaciousness. Sometimes, like on Horsepower's "Sholay," even the drum and bass combination relies on poignant spaces, while distant wails waver and echo. "Sholay" is followed by El-B's "Amazon," which similarly duets bass and drums to knockin' garage-style syncopation while an eerie horn reaches for infinity. In fact, the whole mix feels like an extended dub version of an A-side vocal track, bass purity guided by gentle 150 bpm drum two-stepping.

DJ Hacha's *Dubstep* does the two-step march on Babylon, a patient cyborg, blissfully twitchy and confidently deliberate. Bold, almost painterly strokes of bass streak across the space, indelibly marking the post-future with sparks of snares, nestled satisfyingly between the hardcore, the yincore, and the blingcore, just when Chuck Chillout needs a dire kick in the ass. *Jon Weldon*



Satamile Records crew (from left): Sara Walker, E.M.S., Satamile and Freezie FreaKie

AUTOBOT
Satamile/US/CD
 Satamile releases its first CD compilation of vinyl tracks, a collection of mostly textbook *Bladerunner*-esque electro that slides along its smooth metallic finish, lightly bumpin' and nonchalant. Silicon Scally's "The Silent Years" bounces swiftly and sharply, with a luminescent synth-harp riff bolting through, and Decal's "Riptide" is cool yet jittery. Each of the tracks on *Autobot* lock into an automaton's groove instan-

aneously, for better (they're immediately hypnotic) and worse (that's about all they are). You rarely get the sense that within all of the smoothly mechanized parts, some sort of spontaneous vitality is arising within the structure of the rhythm; the music doesn't often take on a life of its own. This Tin Man's built almost perfectly—now all he needs is a heart. *Selena Hsu*

2CDS & MP3S

Novamute/US/CD
 With 16 tracks and 28 MP3s spanning two CDs, this compilation doubles as not only a Novamute "state of the union" overview, but also as a statement on disunion. Compiling tracks mostly previously released on vinyl while conversely indicating a future of digital in/digital out (contrary to many labels), Novamute here offers not only mirrored MP3s, but *exclusive* MP3s. Alongside crisp configurations of post-industrial/electro/acid (house) sounds by Tim Wright, Umek, S.I. Futures, Speedy J, Luke Slater, Acid Casuals, Echoboy, Plastikman, Cabaret Voltaire, Nitzer Ebb and more (including Thomas Brinkmann and Akufen remixes) are MP3 exclusives featuring work by some of the above, plus Derrick May, Buckfunk 3000, Steve Stool, Tiga and more. Novamute show that future distribution doesn't have to be any one way any more than the music does, and the clock towards label reinvention is ticking as steadily as these techy tracks. *Tony Ware*

7 HEADS R BETTER THAN ONE

7 Heads/US/CD
 If an outwardly stoic, but inwardly sensitive guy were an album, he would be the *7 Heads R Better than One* compilation. Sometimes it's an album caught up in being a dude, embodied in Djinji Brown's brawny drum & bass studio effects on "Mr. Dynamite" and J-Live's Cassanova-ish "Braggin Writes Rmx." Other times it's smart, urbane, and not afraid to get down in the muck with you, as in the balmly jazz loop and ponderous flows of "Moodswings" with Asheru and Talib Kweli. Part bro, part brohemian, it's all about winning combinations. *Rachel Swan*

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES 3.02

Touch & Go/US/CD
 If *Car & Driver* magazine were to commission a compilation of electronic compositions, they would need to look no further than this comp to know the work's already done. Primarily comprising exclusive material curated by post-electro reconstructuralists Autechre, much of *ATP 3.02*—including tracks by Public Enemy, Anthony "Shake" Shakir and Earth—helps define "piston-pumping." In contrast, there are selections both subtle and supple—including Stasis, Disjecta and Bola—to match the serene glide of those luxury sedan ads. Disc one focuses on abstract hip-hop and ominous ticking laptops (Gescom, Kool Keith), while disc two features more ricocheting percussive explorations (Baby Ford, Hecker). Highlights include Push Button Objects's Asian-flecked flitter and BFC's post-FSOL flutter. As should be expected of Autechre influences and contemporaries, tracks are as methodical as they are mesmerizing. *Tony Ware*

AMOEBIA MUSIC VOL. IV

Hip Hop Slam/US/CD
 Amoeba's latest melange includes everything from womanist spoken word to indie shogazer pap—all culled from the East Bay, Frisco and LA scenes. The totally hype parts: Balanceman's quirky "Soup Or Spy?", which combines '70s spy-film horns with outer-spacey studio effects, Mr. Lif's agitpropist "Earthcrusher," and Lo Lo Swift's sick flows on Equipto's "Rap Attack." The more restrained, but still dope, parts: Loquat's dulcet and schmaltzy "To the Floor," Lil Miss Ju Ju B's schizoid "S&M Boulevard" and Tim'm's loping, Spearhead-y "Red Dirt." Good pickin's, overall: some of *Volume IV*'s 39 tracks are wacker than others, but none warrants a diss. *Rachel Swan*

BETA BODEGA COALITION:

DJ AURA & DJ POLARIS: BETAQUATCH
Beta Bodega/US/CD
LOS FOUR AMIGOS:
MIAMI MILITIA: POLARIS, KARAKTER, BOBBY D, AURA
Cochlear Projects/US/CD
 If you only buy one mix CD this year...Oh,oops, it's a double review, and both discs feature America's most precious IDM resource, DJ Aura. Assisted by DJ Polaris, some manipulative silver boxes and a few freestyling MCs who ruin things near the end, DJ Aura smoothes out rough politicized beats whilst compiling back-catalog gems from the Beta Bodega, Rice and Beans, Phonoforum and Botanica del Jibaro labels, inducing a challenging, enjoyable listen. *Los Four Amigos* is a sort of mini mega-mix of Miami pride, with four sections of awesome IDM assemblages. So buy two mixed CDs this year. *Brian Paul*

BRAZILIAN BEATS 4

Mr Bongo/UK/CD
 Unlike compilations that just sample three or four über-famous Brazilian artists, BB4 encompasses a wider range of Brazilian music. "Paz E Arroz," for example, takes samba's hip-shaking feel and puts it into pop; Brazilian musical stalwart Jorge Ben originally recorded the song in the '70s. The Sonia Rosa/Yuji Ohno version of "Casa Forte," often recorded and usually horn-driven, strips the songs down and ups the jazz percussion. Star DJ Marky shows up, too, working with XRS to remix an excellent Ivo Mendes song. And there are still traditional touches, like the two songs about the dance/martial art capoeira. *Luciana Lopez*

BRAZILIAN LOVE AFFAIR VOLUME 4

Far Out/UK/CD
 For sexy, you can't really go wrong with swirling Fender Rhodes, sultry Portuguese vocals, a light bossa beat and strings. That's good news for this compilation, which, thanks to Patricia Marx's "E O Meu Amor Vi Passar," starts off on exactly the right note. It's also

got a great mix of classic masters (e.g. Marcos Valle, Joyce) and up-and-comers. For all its progressive electronic sounds, *BLA* has a legit base in tradition, as a few of the tracks are dug up from secret Brazilian vaults. It's a mostly solid compilation that's more uptempo than down, and that relies on percussion, violins and breezy vocals to sort out the melancholy in your life. *Jesse Terry*

BROOKLYN KEEPS ON TAKIN' IT

Record Camp/US/CD
 Evidently, the city of Brooklyn is taking some sort of substance that causes its inhabitants to make serious forward-thinking electro-fused IDM and hip-hop. There's a veritable truckload of examples on this vital collection, which hints at a grand future for this upstart label. Heat Sensor clatters along, invoking Manchester's finest. Celine's clarion-call voice from the heavens does battle with an array of sublime obliterating digital abstractions. Satellite Beach drags you to the beautiful electro disco atop Mt. Olympus. And Galvanized offers up the impossible conflation of Detroit, IDM and post-punk. Brooklyn, please keep on taking it. *Brian Paul*

DECKS AND THE CITY: VOL. TWO CHICAGO/ DIZ

Takeout/US/ CD
 From deep and dubby to jacked and jerky, Chicago's native son Diz stays true to his roots on this tight mix. After a somewhat forgettable start, with cuts from Sysco and David Duriez that otherwise might be standouts on a lesser compilation, Diz hits his stride on his own collaboration with Iz, "Love It, Dub it." When Mark Farina announces that it's "Time to Jack," you know the goods are on their way, and the ensuing funk builds to a fitting finale with Joshua's bleeping, tracky masterpiece "Hustlin." If the crew is as strong as Diz's, no harm representin'. *Peter Nicholson*

ELECTROCLASH MIX BY LARRY TEE

Moonshine/US/CD
 Larry Tee is arguably the Patient Zero of the whole damn electroclash virus, and his mix of who's-who in the said genre reveals its Achilles' heel. These bandwagon pioneers' dour, awkward Casio melodies and plodding 808 beats set above vocalists trying to sound detached from the sleaze they champion is music one must pretend to enjoy enough to dance to. That's why irony is so, like, totally hip. Some highlights: Bis's Super Mario disco on "Shack Up," Vostak's Euro-trash travelogue on "Airlanes," and Adult!'s leafblower-moog treatment of Felix Da Housecat's "Silver Screen." Tee's showcase, like any 15-minute moment of retrophilia, seems frozen stiff—just like its inspiration from '80s fashion magazines that can do nothing but yellow. *Cameron Macdonald*

END050

End/UK/CD
 Mr. C's Subterrain night at The End nightclub in London has been credited with the birth of the tech-house genre. The superclub has invariably done as much for tech-addled fiends as End Recordings, which celebrates its 50th release with *End050*. The compilation is a smattering of artists represented by the label to date, such as Tigerhook Corp, Killer Loop, Tone Theory, Layo & Bushwhackal, and Circulation. As a retrospective, *End050* looks back over the eight years since End Recordings' inception, and brings a sense of resolution. *Sara Jayne Crow*

IKEBANA: MERZBOW'S AMLUX REBUILT

Important/US/CD
 Not exactly a remix album—how does one *remix* noise?—but a service provided by Merzbow, offering his *Amlux* album to a wide range of noise tinkers to have their way with. Slutty, isn't it? Mostly, the artists hold true to form while the thread of noise holds the disparate collection together. As Plug, Luke Vibert uses the dull noise-scalpel to mash Amens; Negativland creates sarcastic dystopic space with the static; and Mouse on Mars uses searing noise to rot guitars. Indeed, selling his noise-soul works wonderfully—across the board, Merzbow adds depth and breadth to the works. *Jon Weldon*

INNER CITY SOUNDS

Ubiquity/US/CD
 If you're not actually rolling in a souped-up Cadillac with Supafly and Koffy Brown, the compilation *Inner City Sounds* is one of your better alternatives. It's laced with underground funk, soul and boogie tunes recorded between 1969 and 1977 for Inner City Records. Danceable, sample-friendly cuts like Mary Love's "More Love" outshine more plodding numbers like United Soul Association's "Sticky Boom Boom"—which sounds more like notes toward a funk song than an actual funk song. Kitsch notwithstanding, this funky, plucky compilation offers a rare taste of the disco sleeper-joints that once made garages and record stores get crunk. *Rachel Swan*

JACK TO THE FUTURE

Resopal/GER/CD
 There are certain obvious links between the past and the present: the road paved by the Rolling Stones for the Strokes is an obvious example. Then there's the Duchamp-Warhol connection. Other associations, however, aren't always so easily discernible.

Here, the evolution of house is summarized by producers like Håkan Lidbo, Misc. and Rob Acid, who all throw down previously unreleased tracks that blend the details of the modern micro sound with the luscious and pulsating hedonism of early dance music. What you get is a conscious and playful reference to the nights when Chicago pounded its collective fist around the world. *Matt Eberhart*

IK7150

IK7/US/CD&DVD
 In honor of their 150th release, IK7 have released a two CD/one DVD set compiling classic and upcoming releases, including tracks by Tosca, Herbert, Rae & Christian, Swayzak, Spacek, K&D, Terranova, Ursula Rucker and more. Reading the IK7 roster is like checking through a who's who of the best in electronic music, as the compilation quickly evinces; since 1996, few labels can match the extraordinary job IK7 has done collecting experimental, danceable and groundbreaking artists. The DVD, particularly the videos for Tosca's "Honey" and Peace Orchestra's "Shining," are great softcore-porn background fodder for your next orgy. *Jesse Terry*

MADLIB: SHADES OF BLUE

Bluenote/US/CD
 Crate-digger and storied producer Madlib cooks up a tasty and tasteful chicken soup with *Shades of Blue*. The album is one part bitches brew: DJ Lord flavors original cuts from Bobby Hutcherson in the joint "Montara." It's one part weak sauce: snare-heavy rock beats collide with lilting flutes in the overly-beefed remix of Otis Jackson Jr.'s "Funky Blue Note." It's one part meat stock: by layering straight hand-claps over liquid vibes, Madlib discovers something haunting and beautiful in Ronnie Foster's "Mystic Brew." Smoke a blunt before listening, and try to get all the nuances. *Rachel Swan*

MTV MONO

Tru Thoughts/UK/CD
 This is the product of Quantic soundtracking an extreme sports TV series on a network better known for their love of money-digging majors and eye candy popstars than cutting-edge Brighton beats. This unlikely, but nonetheless welcomed marriage has brought us one selection of lazy downtempo grooves and another of swaggering b-boy breaks and funk-ed-up soulful flavors. Al Stylus contributes "High Rise," an upward looking collage of soothing strumming, splashing percussion and dazzling keys. Wikkaman & Ulysses's "Sweet Science" fuses broken step percussion, a venomous bass and roving utopian synths with outstanding precision. Now where's that snowboard? *Jon Freer*

NOWE:LE

Vivo/POL/CD
 What we have here is a failure to communicate. With *Nowe:le*, the microscopic Vivo label pulls off a gutsy heist of the *Clicks & Cuts* template, uniting artists from Poland, Japan and the United States under one pseudo-experimental banner. Dime-a-dozen digital effects abound here, but Texas's Yume brightens things up with some inspired use of wind chimes as both percussive and harmonic instruments. Like too much computer-made music these days, *Nowe:le* plays like nothing more than middle-of-the-road esotericism, proffering seemingly aimless, unfinished pieces. Where's the love? *Martin Turenne*

RAGGA RAGGA RAGGA 2003

C-4 Greensleeves/UK/CD
 The hardcore, robotic, one-drop riddims of *Ragga Ragga Ragga* hark back to the mid-'90s bogle era, while its best song—Alozade, Hollow Point, and Mr. Vegas's "Under Mi Sensi"—references the classic ganja anthems voiced by Wayne

Smith and Barrington Levy in the '80s. Sean Paul's "Ever Blazing" and Elephant Man's "Fuck U Sign" offer evidence these stars nah done, while newcomers Vyb3 Cartel and veterans Beenie Man, Bounty Killer and Mad Cobra keep it rude and kinky on tracks like "My Dickie" and "Pum Pum." C-4, meanwhile, presents 20 artists holding forth on the hypnotic King of Kings-produced riddim, which gets a lot of mileage out of a synthesized string arrangement. The gully patois of Elephant Man, Vyb3 Cartel and Bling Dawg overshadows the Rasta sentiments of Sizzla, Turbulence and Anthony B, hopelessly outnumbered and out-gunned by the slack toasters dem pon de track. *Eric K. Arnold*

RETRO>FUTURE

Functional Breaks/UK/CD
 Aussie DJs Phil K and Ben & Lex offer two funky breaks mixes that sound more like mid-'90s West Coast than post-millennium Down Under. Phil K's set indulges in plenty of trancey overtones throughout, with most tracks sounding like they were plucked from some early AM rave set from around that time. Ben & Lex offer a more minimal and interesting ensemble that shifts into more relaxed grooves about halfway through. San Francisco's Anten-nae delivers the strongest cuts on each of these two mixes, adding some much-needed electro beatwork to these otherwise dated offerings. *Janet Zhou*

SKULLY: CHAMPION SOUNDS

DMC/UK/CD
 Skully, current DMC UK champion and DMC World runner-up, pulls through with an excellent CD featuring original raps over some new and recycled rhythms; and, of course, amazing turntable work. Okay, sometimes the words do border on the cliché, but the attitude consistently remains heavy-hitting and precise. My favorite tracks include "Components of Competition," with Unleashed by Science on the mic as Skully superbly drops lyrical samples; Royalty with Mikey Starr up on Gang Starr's "Check the Technique" for "Word Play;" and Joe Buhdha and Terrafirma on "B 4 U Die." The mix CD approach works well for this project too—an entertaining, fluid flow highlighting both mic and vinyl skills. *Rob Riddle*

SPEICHER CD 1: M.MAYER MIX

Kompakt/GER/CD
 Admittedly, the back catalog of Kompakt is a daunting thing indeed. And with their subtly different labels clogging the Kompakt section

of your local record shop and blending into a muddy sea of micro-house, isn't it better to have label head Michael Mayer expertly mix your journey for you? This solid mix incorporates a few of his own tracks (including the near-perfect chugging dubbed-up chimes of "Unter Null"), plus those of other top-shelf producers like Superpitcher, Reinhard Voigt and everyone's favorite, T.Raumschmiere. *Speicher?* Special. *Brian Paul*

STONES THROW RECORDS—2003 SAMPLER

Stones Throw/US/CD
 Madlib is the new Prince, and Stones Throw is his vehicle. He's so prolific it's sometimes overwhelming, and while some tracks here are occasionally underwhelming, for the most part Madlib and his cohorts (Wildchild, label founder PB Wolf, Jay Dee, Dudley Perkins, MF Doom, and more) deliver strictly genius material. There are times on this compilation when the beats feel like they should have been left on the cutting room floor, the MCing should have been left to MCs rather than beatmakers, and the singing left to singers, not rappers. But those moments are balanced by some wow-that-shit-is-hot kind of beats. At the very least, this sampler lets you know things you must buy: Jaylib, Yesterday's New Quintet and Madvillain (MF Doom), to start with. *Jesse Terry*

STYLISTIQUE VOL. 1: PARIS UNDER A GROOVE

Newhouse/US/CD
 Smooth, sleek and seductive, *Paris Under A Groove* captures the slick elegance of a night on the town in the irrepressibly chic city. The disc strings together a collection of strong tunes from the likes of St. Germain, Terrasse Tranquille, Florian and other French acts, taking the listener on a journey from cold, classy lounge tracks to swanky French disco numbers and back to late-night chill-out grooves, all in the span of 72 minutes. A bit of a whirlwind rush, but most of the tracks are strong enough to make for a pleasant ride. *Christine Hsieh*

TAKE ME AOSIS: A NITE OUT IN LONDON

Aosis/JPN/CD
 After bringing the crème de la crème of Japanese electronic grooves to a wider audience with his first comp, *Moshi Moshi*, this selection from Nik Weston is a jazzier affair. It is the distinguished Aosis imprint that gets the once over this time. Jazouster's version of "Family Affair" is a luxuriously beautiful cover, with twinkling, happy keys, an angelic flute and glittering strings. "Speed Of Love" by Seikou Nagaoka is a hopelessly romantic ode, where idyllic vocals partner with heavenly strings, sweet keys and excited kit percussion. Each cut here has been selected for its combined dancefloor reaction and musical excellence. *Jon Freer*

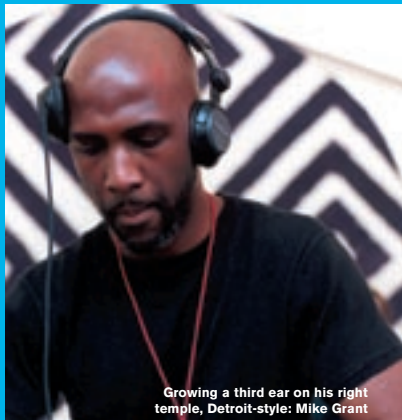
TURNTABLES ON THE HUDSON VOL 4

Giant Step/US/CD
 Renowned for its combination of funk beats, live Afro-percussion, and a wicked vibe, Turntables On The Hudson has long brightened New York's dance scene. Founders Nickodemus and Mariano represent the vibe on the fourth TOTH compilation, eschewing the Eastern influence of earlier releases for a conceptual trip through NYC's boroughs. From Spanish Harlem to Brooklyn and back, a quality selection of previously unreleased tracks and remixes from the TOTH crew is collected. Beginning with an old school hip-hop vibe and moving through Afrobeat and Puerto Rican influences, the mix features artists like Baby Mammoth, Plastic Buddha, Antibalas, and Nickodemus & Osiris. *Joe Rice*



JAZZANOVA REMIXED

Compost/GER/CD
 After years of delivering hot remixes, Jazzanova calls in the favors and treats their track collection to a makeover, with pretty damn good results. There's something here for everyone: hip-hop/soul heads will enjoy Jazzy Jeff, Madlib and King Britt; Stereolab and Ian O'Brian dissect Jazza's catalogue; Domu comes with a broken-beat feel; and DJ GHE delivers on of the best downtempo cuts on the comp. While some of the tracks are exclusive to this collection, most have been floating around on twelve-inch format—it's nice to hear them all side-by-side on two CDs. The variety and skill-level of the people Jazzanova has gathered to remix their tracks is pretty unbelievable. I wish I had friends like these. *Jesse Terry*



Growing a third ear on his right temple, Detroit-style: Mike Grant

HOUSE GUEST REVIEWS:
MIKE GRANT

Just saying that Mike Grant is Detroit house doesn't do the man justice. The DJ, producer and owner of the vaunted Big 50 label group (Moods & Grooves, End to End, Afrosinrix) harken back to Motor City's early '80s DJ scene, as he and legends like Eddie Fowlkes, Derrick May, and Juan Atkins opened the city's club and radio circuit to the techno and house sounds pounding their brains. Further, Grant brought those sounds to the West Coast during the late-'80s, focusing

on house during the '90s but never forsaking the techno style of the pivotal "Nature of the Beast" single he recorded as Black Noise (remixes of which are forthcoming on End to End). The names in the Moods & Grooves back catalogue (Alton Miller, John Tejada, Theo Parrish, Boo Williams) speak for themselves—we're talking about simply hot rhythm music, period. And let's not forget his own releases, including his latest M&G EP "How Long Must I Continue...," out now. Fresh off playing Detroit's Movement music festival, the guy's got some opinions on what's out there. *Ron Nachmann*

JEPHTE GUILLAUME POUKI *Spiritual Life/US/12*

Music for the serious dancer. When I first put this on I imagined [late Detroit techno historian] Laura Gavoov out on the floor moving in circles to the hypnotizing rhythms. Great production with five different mixes, although I wish one of them took things into a different direction. *MG*

MR. G NEW BLOOD EP *Shuffle/UK/12*

Collin McBean's main appeal is that his production is universal. His records are played by house, techno, and even trance (yecch) DJs. This one's no exception: for the house-head, "The Day After B" employs filtered vocal samples that slip in and out, while "Flux Tech" pounds the body into submission with only one escape-dance. *MG*

ONLY CHILD FEAT. AMP FIDDLER U BRING ME VIBES *Grand Central/UK/12*

In collaborating with Only Child, Amp Fiddler gets to step out of the shadow of Kenny Dixon Jr. and provide vocals for this track. The result is a mood fit for a late night in a dark room. The flip features Mantis mixes reminiscent of an early Grant Nelson production. *MG*

AQUA BASSINO WE COULD BE FRIENDS

F Communications/FRA/12

Jason Robertson's releases are always worth waiting for, and this one's no exception. Edinburgh, Scotland native Robertson pleases us with thick beats that evoke Romatt Productions's Glasgow Underground classic "I Wanna Ride," with its subtle, moving melodies and strong female vocals by Stacy Smith. Flip for the impossibly deep "I Wanna Get Down," a track Harry The Bastard probably has slated for his next *Club H* offering. *Luke Magnuson*

DJ GENESIS BACK IN THE MIDDLE

Dynamite Soul/US/12

Detroit house up! Your girl Gen tosses a simple two-chord arrangement under vocalists Marvin Belton and Miyon for the title tune on the a-side before running some tight salsa house for singer Yaminah on "Puerto Rico" and giving Common's "Funky 4 U" a twisted house rub on the flip. Uptempo soul for real. *Ron Nachmann*

ELECTRACOUSTIC

SO CLOSE (BLAZE FULL SOUL VOCAL)

Outer/UK/12

Kevin Hedge and Josh Milan relive the glory days of Body and Soul with this remix of "Electracoustic" that has Francois K and Danny Krivit stamped all over it. Aurora Dawn provides the sultry vocals, Hedge and Milan the tight garage beats and jazzy percussion. Slip this on during a Summerstage set and watch the crowd go. *Luke Magnuson*

GAZZARA KEEP ON DOING

SURE PLEASURE NOT ALONE

Irma/US/12

Irma drops two mello-house slabs from their Italian stable. Gazzara's four tracks combine smooth soul vocals, quiet-storm keyboard atmospheres and disco purist rhythms, while the Sure Pleasure team delivers an edgier, more percussive approach. Both do their country's disco tradition proud. *Ron Nachmann*

LARRY HEARD SPACE JUNGLE

Track Mode/US/12

Twenty years on, Mr. Fingers remains on track. The title track here is slowed-down, understated and freaky, alive with quirky synths and tabla beats. The flip's "Déjà Vu" runs similarly opaque, with effects on the vocals that enhance the generally ambiguous atmosphere. The man's still innovating in this young'un's game in middle age—we tip our hats. *Ron Nachmann*

MARKY STAR RATTLENAKE

PANIC BIG BELLED PSYCHO

Big Chief/UK/12

The Big Chief label puts it down again. Marky Star's sexy and spare beats 'n' chords jam gets laced with synth atmospheres and acid by the Get Fucked crew and dub-stripped again by Adam Collins and Francis Harris. Meanwhile, Panic's slower conga-tronic move gets stripped down to just conga before the Leeds's Cosmic Groove Transmission gives it breaky and acidic treatments on the flipside. Thumping. *Walker Lindh*

STATELESS BRINGIN' ME DOWN RMXS

Freerange/UK/12

Andreas Saag tosses a bluesy, keyboard-infused semi-broken 4/4 cut from his *Art of No State* album to the house winds on two slabs from London's Freerange label. On one, Saag laces the b-side of the original with an '80s-styling house rub, while the other disc finds Desha rolling the nu-jazz and Kaidi "Agent K" Tatham doin' that early New York disco thing. *Ron Nachmann*

MATTHIAS TANZMANN THOSE NIGHTS

Moon Harbour/GER/12

Leipzig's minimalist house master Tanzmann breaks it down to the bone with the dubby 'n' skeletal title tune, while the flip's "Side Effects" puts spitting percussion upfront and floating synth chords in the distance. The closing "Ladies First" is all in yr face, hinting perhaps at Tanzmann's late-'80s house influence. Moody and essential. *Lee "Scratch" Miyizeout*



OK, I'm actually a Buddhist: techno meister Christian Smith

TECHNO GUEST REVIEWS:
CHRISTIAN SMITH

As a DJ and production engineer, Christian Smith has been shaping the tech-house and funky techno sound for many years. His popularity extends beyond his vinyl contributions as his three-turntable techniques and clever scratch programming has been captivating audiences globally for over a decade. Currently, Christian heads Tronic Music and has timeless releases on such labels as Intec, Primate, Positiva and Hooj. *Ron Nachmann*

ADAM BEYER E6 REMIX *white/SWE/CD*

A bootleg consisting of Adam Beyer remixing the Manuel Goetsching's classic "E6," often referred to as "Sueño Latino." This track's been bootlegged many times, but this one's the best. The flip side is a somewhat housey mix of Ben Sims's "Remanipulator," with the Cuban vocal riff. Very Ibiza, but still very good, and could potentially be massive. *CS*

RENATO COHEN SPANK *Sino/CH/12*

The rising Brazilian DJ/producer delivers another solid record on Technasia's sub-label Sino. Driving, energetic, funky techno, the way I like it. I performed with him in Sao Paulo, and besides being a very charismatic and good DJ, he also knows how to produce wicked records. *CS*

HARDCELL & PER GRINDVIK 75 *Primate/UK/12*

I really adore the a-side track on this. It's a very Jeff Mills-sounding techno cut-tribal and funky, with very strong chords. It actually sounds like Mills produced by Adam Beyer! Proper! *CS*

LENK 8 DK/Unknown Origin/12

DK was originally launched as a house label by Jesper Dahlbaeck and Thomas Krome, and this is a solo release by Dahlbaeck. Relentless, groovy and dirty techno, a dancefloor destroyer! I play it every set. Jesper is a sick, sick boy! Massive! *CS*

BOLZ BOLZ WARRIOR EP

World Electric/GER/12

After two years off, Bolz Bolz re-emerges to outline the future of his new style. "Do What You Do" and "Chance" are new-school dancefloor electro tracks paired with Bolz Bolz's sensitive analog sound structures. The flipside offers the 4/4 "Who'd She Coo" and "2" Chance," a bass-buster certain to shake the electro-breaks fans' booties! *Forest Green*

MATTHEW DEAR EP 1 & 2

Spectral Sound/US/12

You can't help but think you're listening to some strange history on these two bits of vinyl. Ann Arbor boy Dear neatly disabuses techno of its orthodoxy, either by sucking it into the void à la Coil on "Laguna Madre," snapping it like a sugar pea on "Reae," stuffing it into a cave on "Lakonic," or simply muffling the whole whiny mess under his shoe on "Pinch & Pillage." Ten tracks for the whispered end of history. *Ron Nachmann*

DJ ESP NO FUTURE IN YOUR FRONT

Primevil/UK/12

Woody McBride is currently one of the world's most sought out techno agents, and this title accurately conveys his demeanor. Furthering the evolution of 303 bass, this EP carries rolling grit with the aid of hypnotically dubbed vocals and a solid yet quickly decaying kick. An ideal way to soothe your dance aneurysm. *PRAXIS*

G FLAME & DAVIDE SQUILLACE 5

Sketch/IT/12

Known for introducing hues of warm synthesized waves, Mr. Squillace appears this time with two original tracks and a remix by both G. Flame and the relentless Advent. This clean production weaves between the lines of powerhouse dance-floor and hypnotic funk, leaving an open palette for track-play or tool-usage. *PRAXIS*

RICHIE HAWTIN HARDTRAX VOL. III

Plus 8/CAN/12

For its 80th release, Plus 8 offers up the previously unreleased follow-up to the Hardtrax series from 1994. With this EP, Hawtin created a bleepy, deep, minimal four-tracker that still sounds fresh as the morning dew. After spending a decade in the vault, these tracks are a great addition to the Hawtin fan's collection. *Forest Green & Chris Burline*

LITERON SWITCH TO DIS

Fortek/NETH/12

After creating club-oriented mixes for such labels as Brave New World and EC Records, this electronic twiddler twists one up for his Rotterdam-based imprint. Starting with a predictable loopy percussion track, this LP takes a surprisingly intuitive twist with an innovative delay fill leading to succulent cymbals and brilliant waves. *PRAXIS*

LUCIANO AND MATHEW JONSON ALPINE ROCKET

Perlon/GER/12

Perlon's 32nd release offers a deep, two-track minimal techno experience. This isn't your regular tracky minimal either, but whole songs beautifully crafted with all the nuances of glitch house. The a-side is garnished with tasteful vocals and a short synth break, while Luciano's solo "Mr. Chancleta" on the flip is harder with a strong, repetitive bassline. Just brown and serve! *Chris Burline*

PAUL MAC BACK AND FORTH

Primate/UK/12

Following his massive album, *Cards On The Table*, this master of organic tribal mischief returns with another colossal floor-filler geared towards the polyrhythmic ear. Stabbing basslines and delicate keys guard the front side, while Oliver Ho lends a deeper take on the flip. Pure progress. *PRAXIS*

MAS 2008 FORWARD CONTRAIRE

Twilight 76/US/12

German electro artists René Kirchner and Ivo Müller bring their third release on the Detroit-based DJ Godfather's Twilight 76 label. It lives up to that imprint's standard—robotic 140 BPM techno bass that's begging to blast out the bins and pack the floor. *Chris Burline*

ULTRAKURT & PANTYTEC BARRY-LYNN BRONZON

Telegraph/FRA/12

Cabanne and Gluck of Ultrakurt are back with some more crunchy goodness after releasing their solid cut, "Post Office," last year and remixing Perlon favorite Pantytec. Zip and Sammy Dee return the favor on this EP, with a great remix of "2 Millimeters" that makes this a French minimal-techno gem. *Forest Green*

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"We're in trouble, mate—Tuf's started smoking his flashlight again": Breakin' Bread crew's Tufkut (L), Skeg and Rob Life.

HIP-HOP GUEST REVIEWS: BREAKIN' BREAD CREW

If you're talkin' rare-groove funk combined with old-school hip-hop culture in South London, you're talkin' about the Breakin' Bread crew. Between their five-year-old monthly club night (replete with b-boys, graf installations, and MC and beatbox jams alongside the scratchin'), their Sunday afternoon radio show on the capital's Itch 105, and the label they've been running since 1999, Skeg, Rob Life and Tufkut have been truly representing. Breakin' Bread's now, out-of-print "Sevens Series" of seven 45rpm beatbreakin' singles put 'em on the UK hip-hop map, and their *Deadly 7" Sins* comp in 2002 sealed the deal. Check for upcoming BB 45s by Color Climax and Keno 1 & the Hermit, and "The Kings Head" EP in late summer. But what platters are these geezers servin' those buttered crusts on? *Ron Nachmann*

JEHST, SUPA T, CEE-WHY, LG & LOPEZ PARTY ANIMALS YNR/UK/12

A dope EP that showcases the superb UK talents marshalled by the YNR imprint. Uptempo club banger on the a-side, deep and dark headnodder, "Seein' Red," on the flip. A future UK classic. *BBC*

FREDDIE FOXXX A.K.A. BUMPY KNUCKLES

KONEXION
BBE-Rapster/UK/12
On "Konexion," the self-proclaimed "Rakim with muscles" lets you know that he's hip-hop and you're not. His newfound spirituality and self-knowledge do nothing to temper his trademark invective—he's still Freddie from the (cell) block. The flipside's "P.A.I.N.E." is a dark Premier beat, tailor-made for the man with mic skills and hand skills. *Ross Hogg*

LIBRETTO DIRTY THANGS

One Drop/US/12
With fat backing from Lifesavas producer Jumbo, former Watts resident Libretto brings irresistibly scruffy flow to Portland dub label BSI's hip-hop imprint One Drop. On the East Coast-ish title tune, Lib rhymes of street struggle and "low times on the brain" over a guitar-plucking monster beat, while the flip's "Alma Mater" harkens back to golden-age SoCal G-funk. Hot. *Ron Nachmann*

MATHEMATICS

RESPECT MINE (FEAT. WU-TANG CLAN)

High Times/US/12
On "Respect Mine," extended Wu-Tang family member Mathematics graciously hosts the Clan. So graciously, in fact, that he's outshined on his

own song. If you like the Wu, you'll like this. Math's featured more prominently on the flip's "Just Can't Luv," as is a repetitive/abrasive vocal sample that makes you miss the Wu. *Ross Hogg*

NOTTZ PRESENTS DMP LIFE AIN'T SWEET

Teamsta/US/12
Virginia's given us producers like Timba, Neptunes and even Premier (born in Norfolk, baby), and your boy Nottz stands tall among 'em. This time (unlike last year's "Don't Wanna Give That Up"), his MC DMP finds his mark with the compelling ghetto-existentialist "Life Ain't Sweet;" "Where was the hood when my stomach was growlin'" indeed. The gorgeous soul vocal on the chorus doesn't hurt a bit, nor does the flipside's bold and disciplined "Uncutt Raw." This slab could portend big things for these cats. *Ron Nachmann*

PHIFE DAWG U KNOW U WANT IT

Smokin Needles/US/12
On "U Know U Want It," Phife proves that he can still kick it. DJ/producer Rasta Root creates a beat that would make any Tribe head nod, while songstresses Slick and Rose croon the chorus. On the flip's "Diggy Dialect," Kingston's Hawkeye joins Mutty Ranks for the perfect balance of dancehall and hip-hop. Ya dunn know. *Ross Hogg*

JURASSIC 5 A DAY AT THE RACES Interscope/US/12

The best party rockin' track off the last LP, finally available in the UK on a promo 12". The chainsaw cuts that introduce verses by Big Daddy Kane and Percee P are awesome!! *BBC*

SOUL FUNKY LETS GET DOWN (DJ DUB VOCAL) Grove St./US/12

This sums up the Breakin Bread sound. Uptempo, heavy hip-hop beats, singing, rapping and a backing track that goes from electronica to soul and back again via hip-hop. I know of only two copies of this, and we need more!! *BBC*

TASK FORCE & BRAINTAX/RODNEY P. FARMA G. MYSTRO & BRAINTAX

ROCKSTARS/YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE Lowlife/UK/12
The UK's premier independent label has released *Food*, a superb compilation featuring all the luminaries of the burgeoning UK scene. This "Desserts" 12" from the album shows how a label can mature into something special if they are given the chance to release over 20 records (not many imprints in the UK scene have ever done that!). *BBC*

SAJ SUPREME THE WON

ABB/US/12
The skilled Saj Supreme busts out, announcing that he's "on a one-way mission to get your casket closed!" "The Won" highlights both his impressive, brazen flow and his DJ Mick Boogie's tight cuts, but Moss's unfortunately trebly production leaves the side sounding thin and shrill. Thankfully, Moss gets more spare on the flip's more martial "Bump Da Gunz," and though the gun-cock sample's a lil' tired, it comes off well-crafted. *Ron Nachmann*

SKEME, BIG P, EXTREMISTS/EST'ELLE

EVERYBODY
Titan Sounds/UK/12
Four of London's underground hip-hop stars throw down about their city's summer party doings over some plucky rare-groove beats by Titan Sounds owners Mickle and Skitz, while singer Est'elle croons out the chorus. Even if the lyrics are a bit local, you should at least grab this for the bangin' instrumental. *Walker Lindh*

SKILLZ OFF THE WALL

Rawkus/US/12
Is this a Neptunes beat from 1986? No, it's from modern-day genius Timbaland, who links with underground vet and fellow Virginian Skillz and his endless one-liners to create a cut that's

as at home on dubs as it is in clubs. Maybe Skillz will get some long overdue mainstream shine with this one. *Ross Hogg*

STYLY CEE FEAT. C-MONE & MIDNYTE

KOFFI'S NIGHT
C-MONE GIRL NEXT DOOR EP
Son/UK/12
Nottingham's Son label's been doing it for about five years now—where've you been? Producer Styly Cee provides the beats behind tight MC Midnyte on "Koffi's Night," but your best money's on smooth female rhymer C-Mone, who offers up "Joyriders" for the flip, and another four urgently hard bits for her "Girl Next Door" EP. UK magic. *Ron Nachmann*

TAJAI THE DUM-DUM

Hieroglyphics/US/12
Two of Oakland's Souls of Mischief go monster-mashin'. Tajai lays down some of that intense, forward-lookin' "make-it-happen-rap-pin'" over A-Plus's hot, Chinese violin-tinged beat on the title track, then over Skitzo's stressed, almost technofied rhythm on the flip's "Who Got It?" With an album on tap, Taj throws down the gauntlet inna hardcore style. *Ron Nachmann*

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"One Bad Mouse, I am": the one like Deep Blue

DRUM & BASS GUEST REVIEWS: DEEP BLUE

A founding member of the infamous 2 Bad Mice crew, Sean O'Keefe has since become best known as a solo artist under the name Deep Blue. Responsible for 1993's "The Helicopter Tune" as well as co-founding the seminal Partisan imprint, O'Keefe's never followed the trends, remixing bits for artists including Joey Beltram, UB40, Kevin Saunderson and Terra Deva. Discerning listeners have also caught his stuff surfacing on Playstation soundtracks and the occasional Hollywood movie. O'Keefe's recent team-up with fellow

d&b legend Omni Trio as Black Rain has resulted in a full-length project, *All Tomorrow's Food*, due soon on their freshly minted Scale imprint. Never one to rest in the studio, Sean took a much-needed break to let us in on some tunes worth checking in the coming month. *Chris Muniz*

HIGH CONTRAST THE BASEMENT TRACK Hospital/UK/12

A beautiful trip down memory lane, as High Contrast works in all your favourite old-skool sounds: female vocals, sax and even the odd air horn. While it sounds like a recipe for disaster, it's definitely not! You can't help but love this one. *DB*

CALIBRE MAKE ME WONDER Signature/IR/12

Funky guitar stabs, vocal hooks, Amens and some authentic hand claps make this a sure dancefloor hit. Check the flip's "Got To Have You" for a lazier vibe and one of the catchiest b-lines you'll hear all summer. One to make you sweat. *DB*

SEBA MAKE MY WAY HOME Offshore/US/12

Two stunning tracks from the excellent Brooklyn-based label. Soulful yet challenging, Seba expertly mixes beautiful layered sounds with cutting analogue bass. Definitely the best drum & bass has to offer. *DB*

KINGZ OF THE ROLLERS, VOL. 3 31 Records/UK/2x12

The highlights of this four-tracker are D-Kay's "Reach Inside" and the Usual Suspects's "Sapphire 7," both striking the perfect balance between lush pads and tough beats. Hats off to Doc Scott for supporting all styles of d&b. *DB*

BAD COMPANY

GRUNGE 3 (DIESELBOY & KAOS & KARL K RMX) Human/US/12

Searing mechanical madness results when Philly's drum & bass soldiers turn Bad Co.'s "Grunge" into an opus of punching snares, punishing bass, and tons of sick buildups and break-downs. On the flip, Hive preserves the uplifting intro of "Mass Hysteria" before dropping the track into pounding techno madness and pulling it back out into a hype, bouncy, bass-filled booty-mover. Both remixes show these artists giving BC a run for their money. Slamming! *Star Eyes*

OSRLT001

Offshore/US/12
Brooklyn-based DJ Clever brings together some heavies for this spotlight on his leftfield d&b imprint. On the a-side, Deep Blue's elegant "Do You Voodoo" draws spindly percussion and warm bass tones in the atmosphere, while Justice bumps traces of Amens against some rumbling low-end. On the flip, Pieter K's tentative "Rapport" flutters its drums and wows its bassline through emotive piano lines, while Graphic's off-balance percussion on "1000" proves almost sensual, though who knows whether it'll work on the dancefloor. As usual, Offshore takes risks. *Ron Nachmann*

GRIDLOK UNDER THE KNIFE

Sudden Def/UK/12
Oakland's own Gridlok continues to spread the disease, dropping a pair of hallucinogenic bits designed to set the dancefloor dreamers on fire. "Under the Knife" stands out as the top cut, centered on heavy-duty atmosphere that slowly evolves into the full-blown beast at the core. Partygoers best look out for the drop, because that bass will suck the air right out the room. Big tune! *Chris Muniz*

**IMPULSE & SUBMERGED CORRUPT SOULS
TEEBEE VS. FUTURE PROPHECIES SUBCRISIS**

Subtitles/UK/12
Subtitles has been churning out the tunes as of late, and these two bits definitely lead the way.



"Uffda! Who wants some lutefisk?": so says localPatron

FUTURE JAZZ GUEST REVIEWS: LOCALPATRON

Back in the early '90s, Norwegian DJ localPatron a.k.a. Andre Utvik had to face it that his adopted hometown of Oslo was not an acid jazz hotspot. So he and his crew did something about it: they started both the Jazid nightclub and record shop in order to help their fellow Norwegians to the era's acid jazz, break-beat and related sounds. Besides hosting local DJs like Espen Horne (a.k.a. Bobby Hughes Experience) and Teebee, the Jazid club attracted the likes of Pressure Drop, Snowboy, Laurent Garnier, Grooverider, Derrick Carter and Reclouse. And when Utvik and crew formed the Jazid Collective label in '99 to release his collaborations with slowSupreme, the global jazz massive responded voraciously. Jazid Collective's just released *didyoueverdoubtthis*, a compilation of mostly Nordic nu-jazz that captures the vibe of the recently retired club, and still-active DJ Utvik's got plenty to say about what's hot on the scene. *Ron Nachmann*

AERATED 2 THE TUNE OF C-side/trax/UK/12

Straight out of Leeds comes this cool and smooth track by 21 year old producer Duncan. It took my total attention when it came our way, because it's a tune with all the good elements: East Coast house combined with dark, English drum & bass synths. *LP*

INFEKTO MY GROOVE Hospital/UK/12

In Barons Court in London, you find my favorite label: Hospital! "My Groove" by Finland's Infekto is as good as it gets—future jazz with a ruff break. The vocal sample invites all the good-looking girls and boys to come out to play. *LP*

RUNDFUNK HØNERYTME Tellé/NOR/12

From the home of Røyksopp, Kings Of Convenience and Annie (to name a few), comes Rundfunk on Tellé, Norway's most interesting label. Almost all the artists on the label come from northern Norway—the land of the midnight sun—and label manager Mikal Telle is a rockstar!! *LP*

DOMU & VOLCOV THE LAST OF THE GREAT APES

Residual/US/12
The guys who otherwise comprise the lite-jazzier Rima give up the percussive goods for Ohioan Titonton Duvante's imprint. You selectors will hate choosing between "Nutsuki"'s busted-down 808 percussion and twangy synth lines, the rubbery chords and thumpy breakbeats of "Secret Powers" (which Titonton strips down, Midwest techno-style, in his mix), and the Detroit-tinged beat convulsions of "Battech," so get two copies. This music's future continues to unfold. *Ron Nachmann*

DUST

WHERE YOU WANNA BE (ROOTS MANUVA RMX) Bar DeLuxe/UK/12

Your man in London, Rodney Smith, puts the funk into cinematic dream-rockers Dust's little jammy-jam with scratches, thunky beats, some West Coast-gone-haywire high-register keyboard noise, and some of those "puke on Babylon"-style lyrics, ya see? Hard, strange and irresistible. *Walker Lindh*

GOAPELE CLOSER

Skyblaze/US/12
Folks are just getting a listen to this Oakland soul chanteuse, and this slab (from *Even Closer*, the remix version of her *Closer*) finds rubs by Zion I's Amp Live and his man Mike Tiger. The title track's minimalist downbeats and warm atmosphere do it right, and the duo then surprises with a bumpin' 2-step mix. The flip's "Childhood Drama" sees producer Johnson giving the track fat hip-hop beats and a nice Peruvian flute riff. Charged. *Ron Nachmann*

DANIEL MAGG SET FOR SEIZURE

**DANIEL MAGG FEAT. MINUS8 O-BAH
MINUS8 FEAT. RAS CHARMER BRAVE & BOLD**

Compost/GER/12
Compost throws down two remixed peeks into its future. Producer Daniel Magg's bit of broken keyboard 'n' vocal house, "Set For Seizure," gets deep-housed by Anthony Nicholson, while Wagon Cookin' and Ennio Styles boost the nu-jazz aspect. Then, Serge Davidov and Ray & John Kong give Magg's Afro-Latin breakbeat jam, "O-Bah," some '80s rub, while Juan Martinez pops it

into electro-land. Meanwhile, "O-Bah" keyboardist Minus8 works downtempo and jungle magic on "Brave & Bold" with ragga chanter Ras Charmer, before having it hyper-dancehall by Britain's Max Fresh and dubbed up by Italy's Dubversive Sound System. Super-tasty, all three. *Hans Blixa Bargeld-Smith*

MATSU! HE BOOMAH

Missive/FRA/12
Newcomer Matthieu Hourteillan brings it for French label Missive, with some subtle, pulsing, midtempo treats that rotate some hardy ragga and soul vocal samples and bits of sitar around stealthy breaks 'n' bass. German duo Tiefschwarz gives it the obligatory house rub, *et voila*, a nice one. *Walker Lindh*

NOVO TEMPO & KOICHI OZAKI

NOVO TEMPO MEETS EURASIAN SUITE Eurasian Suite/JPN/12
Tokyo Latin-jazz band Novo Tempo sandwich Eurasian Suite boss Ozaki's jaunty, piano-based bossa instrumental with the gentle, flute- and vocal-imbued bossa of "Kagaribi," and the contemplative jazz-hop of "Moss." One of many releases that evinces a generally delicate—and Latin-oriented—Japanese take on '00 nu-jazz. *Ron Nachmann*

MAX SEDGLEY THE EP

Irma/US/12
Breakbeat Era/Reprazent drummer Sedgley slows the tempo of his day-job bands in order to go solo as a producer, and the man's got undeniable diversity happening here. Between the brazenly chunky non-clichéd blaxploitation funk of "Happy" to the perky, digi-souful and two-stepping "Two-Way" and the rich downtempo steez of "Slowly," Sedgley leaves us thirsting for more. *Ron Nachmann*

VIPER SQUAD NEON DAWN EP

Far Out/UK/12
DJ Venom carves out some of his best stuff to date for Far Out. Between the flute and vocal sample-infused digi-bossa of the title cut, the Prefuse-evoking downtempo sample-mania of "Case Closed" and the dramatic Detroit-ish broken beats of "Universal People," there's plenty to get with here. Search out. *Ron Nachmann*

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Give 'em a break, then give 'em a hug: SOTO

BREAKS GUEST REVIEWS: SOTO

Comprised of Botchit label manager Sonia Akow and composer Toby Edwards, SOTO has become a key DJ/production duo in today's nu-breaks milieu. With releases like 2001's "Monkey" single and this year's "Confusin'" SOTO has impressively expanded on their electro and house-tinged breaks steez, which they expertly proffer on their weekly Botchit & Scarper show on Breaks FM and at their Collision night at the Bridge & Tunnel in Shoreditch. Holed up lately in the studio in order to bust out their upcoming Botchit single, "Hootenany," Akow and Edwards recently squinted into the sunlight in order to let us know what's bangin' in breakbeat land. *Ron Nachmann*

DAVE BRENNAN DRINK DEEP (JAMES ZABIELA MIX) End/UK/12

A typically deep offering from the End, remixed superbly by James Zabiela. Starting off all housey with gentle piano stabs, this track drops into a real controlled growler of a bassline. It's all sprinkled with some kind of off-kilter, other-worldly noises that really work, before JZ brings the gentle piano back in, with added atmospheric pads subtly tugging away in the background. *Classy. SOTO*

STRINGZ BRING THE DRAMA white/UK/12

Another bootleg of this old classic. While there's a lot of these going around at the moment, they're all pretty damn fine! A few new touches in the breakdown and overall chunky fatness added to the proceedings make for a totally working piece that'll have peeps jumping all over. *SOTO*

TAISHAN THE SHAKE-OFF Resin/UK/12

The Resin label returns to TaiShan for their next release. The man behind "Low Blow" comes back with more booty shakin' business and betrays his obvious old-school electro influences on this, yet another riotous rump bumpin' reveller! No-nonsense female hip-hop samples sit effortlessly alongside analog synth stabs and masterly scratching to prove that TaiShan ain't no flash in the pan! *SOTO*

12" SUPERSTARS GANGSTA DISCO

Sosumi/UK/12

The irreverent Sosumi juggernaut seems to be rolling at an energized pace lately, which is great to see. 12" Superstar's debut hits you off with an A-side of tightly contained breaks thump with a dead-funky rhythm guitar sample and some badass synth chords. The flip's "Electrick" runs a 4/4 break under more synths and a bushel of vocoder chanting, making for a hard, block-is-hot kinda sound. *Sosumi up! Ron Nachmann*

BENT COPPA THE PAYOFF

Proper/UK/12

Your boy Coppa follows up his debut for Proper from last year, "Break In," with another electro-infused party-rocking bit on this title track, which is reminiscent of a more bombastic Elite Force. The flip's "Pimps" rolls with a more '80s feel, but is still pretty mean with its sliced-up streetside vocal samples. *Thumpy. Ron Nachmann*

DIZZEE RASCAL I LUV U

XL/UK/12

This record scares me. If I heard it in a rave, I would probably go hide under a speaker. Dizzee Rascal rapping like some crazy aggressive coked-out Muppet over disastrous beats that are little more than grimy, ramped up Dillinja-style bass and a few breathy samples filling in for snare hits. This cheap-sounding record is doing for UKG what Birdman and the Cash Money clique have done for rap. Plus, it'll grow on you like a motherfucker. *Star Eyes*

DJ LOVE PUSHIN' BUTTONS

Stellar Music/UK/12

With all that retrogressive bootleg/mash-up crap still clogging up the culture, surely there's room for an original disco-breaks jam that folds in old-school house piano chords, the "Good Times" string stab, and Shalamar's "Make That Move"? Or have we lost our souls in easy-peasy cut 'n' paste-ism? If ya don't feel the a-side, flip for "Steady Fire"'s bass-heavy, ragga-infused ska/breakstep opus. *Murder tune! Ron Nachmann*

GEESIX CRU/DJ INANNA BROWN SUGA/MOVE DEEP

Funky Soul Music/US/12

Reps from Boston's heavy Soul Champion crew hold it down on this 12". "Brown Suga" finds the pair of G Notorious White and DeepSix mixing deep, warping bass and samples with light, tinkling keys; flip for a summery, mellow 4/4 workout from Inanna. Both tracks roll along nicely but fail to deliver a heavy dancefloor punch. Still, this is a good start from these Stateside selectors. *Star Eyes*

INFEKTO VS. WILL POWER DON'T RUSH ME

Passenger/UK/12

Since his debut cut on Passenger, Finland's Infekto has been causing quite the stir in the nu-skool scene. With everyone from Gilles Peterson to London Elektric wanting a piece of the action, it's no wonder Aquasky pushed through this follow-up single ASAP. Good for us, because it's nothing short of straight dancefloor mayhem. With his mastery of warping hooks, playful beats and bone-crushing basslines, this cat is here to stay. *Chris Muniz*

KANANGA BOOTY BREAKS

Play Breaks/UK/12

The Play label launches its breaks imprint with a couple tunes by a guy who earlier this year well thumped up Mikey Gallagher's house track "What Does It Mean." The b-side wins on this, because although the weirdly titled a-side's got epic nu-breaks nuances galore, "Inner Feeling"'s boomin' bass, insightful vocal samples and emotive breakdown take the cake. *Thick. Ron Nachmann*

PSYCHOFUNKODISCODELIC CABARET BREAKS

Golden Gate/US/12

The veteran Bay Area house collective puts the big, funky breaks on. The a-side offers up some early-'90s flavor, with a jumpy arrangement that spotlights a mighty three-note bassline and a hit-and-miss array of vocal samples (including some tight Al Pacino bits). The flip brings on a more nu-breaks flavor with a freaky beat, distorted bass and less vocal samples. *Bing-bang-boom. Sada Tay*

RAMSEY & FEN WHAT YOU WANT

Bug/UK/12

Old school stalwarts Ramsay & Fen deliver two cuts that show they haven't lost the fire. "What You Want" is the pick, in which a vocalist makes like a funk Beyoncé over some clever beats; stabbing strings and 2-step's trademark bump & flex mix with some darker breakbeat bass noises for a creative club stormer. "Playboy" on the flip finds the crew working their magic with a pumping 4/4 rinse. *Star Eyes*

THE REMIX EP

Texture/UK/12

Darqwan spotlights his dubstep imprint by putting his "Nocturnal" into the hands of remixer Geeneus, who keeps the bass rumble intact while toughening up the drumbeat. After darkening the wah-bass melody of his own breakstep jam, "Said the Spider," qwan spotlights Markone, who gives his own "Tribesmen" an electro-fied, subterranean rub. As they used to tell Baryshnikov: nice package. *Ron Nachmann*

SMASH FX BRAINKILLER

Rhythmic/SW/12

This Zurich duo churns out a sci-fi breakbeat killer that blasts huge synth stabs and vacuum bass, and riddles the driving percussion with drum & bass-style fills. On the flip, EK ups the ante with his remix, keeping the d&b touches while dubbing up the bassline and touching it with some electro. On point, like those watches they make. *Ron Nachmann*

SOUND-OFF 2 SAMPLER

Fuel/UK/12

Here comes Salim Rafiq, who's infused his previously straight-ahead Miami Bass sound with some adventurous shit by picking tracks like these two for Fuel's second *Sound Off* mix. Cold Fusion boosts "Rinds Gulasch" with some hearty and complex electro programming, while The Dexorcist's "Connect One" runs some classic electro with fanatically big bass. *Ron Nachmann*

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Arthur Jafa



LEFTFIELD GUEST REVIEWS: MUTAMASSIK
You may have first checked Brooklyn-Egyptian DJ/producer Mutamassik's multi-tempoed, hard-steppin', punk-and ragga-spirited Afro-oriental junglist-breaks flavor on her two scorching tracks on Trumystic Sound System's 1998 *Product 3* album. But the lady's been at it for a long minute, remixing for the likes of Arto Lindsay and King Chango, jammin' live with everyone from Vernon Reid to Natacha Atlas, and touring throughout the US, Europe and the Mideast (how many of you have played a Virgin Megastore in Dubai?). Her "War Booty" EP on DJ/rupture's Soot Records is a revelation, and her two forthcoming EPs for Sound-Ink, "High Alert" and "Rough Americana," should prove nothing less. So what's coming out of leftfield to land on this risk-taking globalist's decks? *Ron Nachmann*

KAREN STACKPOLE IMPROV. GONG AND PERCUSSION MUSIC
Dielectric/US/12
Lush, huge dynamics ranging from chiming, piercing, scraping metallic rings to the rumbling deep bass of gongs & toms to challenge any sub-woofer. Solid and subtle electro-acoustic improvisations feature over 30 percussive instruments on a more traditional tip, except for a sustained and scary bass/digi remix by Die Elekrischen on the flip. Overall, sonic artistry made with love and care. *MK*

MORGAN CRAFT VALHALLA (ADAGIO) *Circle of Light/US/CD*
Mournful, anthemic lone-wolf stunt guitar from an Afro-Viking Minnesotan. "First World" electronic improvisation is as resourceful as "Third World," using all parts of the animal (broken strings, cable tips, amp tubes, back springs, machine heads, pickup pole pieces, etc.) to steer electricity to new, spacious sound frontiers. Think long-distance truckin' through an echoing wasteland. A beauty. *MK*

QPE BOOLEAN LOGIC *The Agriculture/US/2x12*
Well-made slower and darker beats. Atmospheric, bruised sounds. The experimental interludes cushioning the beat tracks are especially choice. Next generation from the purveyors of fine "illbience"—can I use that term? *MK*

HECKER 2 TRACK 12" *Mego/AUS/12*
Digital acid-reflux computer abuse to the MAX(MSP-like). There will be gnashing of teeth like piranhas in your earhole. Whether you're the sadist sitting in the parlor smoking a pipe and contemplating it like noise-symphony or getting sodomized to it in a club in Berlin, this actually makes a great DJ tool with its locked grooves, neutron blasts and splurt bombs. *MK*

THE BUG FEAT. CUTTY RANKS GUN DISEASE
AFX SMOJPHACE EP
Rephlex/UK/12
Kevin Martin and the other Rick James keep Rephlex in the neo-ragga-noise sweepstakes, as Aphex Twin's label signs on Jamaica's veteran MC Cutty to voice a growling exclusive over Martin's noise-junglist Bug runnin's. Meanwhile, on his own EP, James as AFX treats Martin's "Run The Place Red" with Daddy Freddy to a jungle mash, then puts two tracks of stupid noise on the flipside. Hooray! *Walker Lindh*

BROADCAST PENDULUM
Warp/UK/12

UK avant-pop quintet Broadcast releases a peek at their most realized album to date. "Pendulum" and the sublime "Still Feels like Tears" are all sweet motorik propulsion. The spazzy analog jazz of "One Hour Empire" and "Violent Playground" recall vintage Sound Library rarities, and closer "Minus Two" sounds like Oval deconstructing the group's live jams. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

GOLDFRAPP TRAIN
MARTIN L. GORE STARDUST
Mute/UK/12

Giving a clinic on crossing back over, Mute gives two of its higher-tier artists some experimental remix treatments. Berlin's expert shit-catapulteer T.Raumschmiere further punks (and, strangely warms up) Goldfrapp's lightly distorted "Train." Meanwhile, former Depeche Mode boy Marty Gore enlists Atom to further destroy his minimalist cover of '70s classic "Stardust," and Stewart Walker to propel his take on the honky-tonk milestone "I Cast a Lonely Shadow" into demi drum & bass land. *Ron Nachmann*

MATTHIAS "MATTY" HEILBRONN RIDDIM PART 1
Wave/US/12

Before you purists razz the rash of house and techno DJ/producers rediscovering dub, check this slab, the flipside of which finds our Matty taking this reggae-tinged tech-house tune into the modern downbeat echo chamber à la Zion Train. An epic ting. *Ron Nachmann*

POLE 45/45
~Scape/US/CD

The only thing harder than originating a brilliant, singular sound of your own must be abandoning it for all the mimics who've run with your steez. Stefan Betke tries his hand at it, nevertheless, losing his trademark tech-dub stylings for some newfound hip-hop flava. And though 45/45 has its fine moments, it still feels like he hasn't quite found the new footing for which he's clearly searching. Still, Pole on a bad day is better than most on their best. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

SUTEKH MICRO SOLUTIONS TO MEGA PROBLEMS
Soul Jazz/UK/12"

Following mate Kit Clayton's debut offering for Soul Jazz's new MSMG series, Sutekh offers a selection of trademark tech-house tomfoolery. "Mouth Party" stutters on vocal samples, like Akufen going vaguely garage. The deliciously titled "Scraping Nails" recalls tropicalista Tom Zé colliding with a humming refrigerator while "Boulez's Toes"—referring somewhat mysteriously to French arch-Modernist composer/conductor Pierre Boulez—proclaims it a party. One of Sutekh's finest moments. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

LUCKY 13

REVIEWS BY TOPH ONE

This damn city has changed so much in the last 10 years that us b&r's (born and raised) can hardly recognize it. One could go on for days: the death of EMB and Psycho City, the closing of Park Bowl, the Hippo and the I-Beam, etc. It's enough to make you stand outside your home-bar on a rainy winter's Tuesday night and wonder where the fun all went. But then summertime rolls around, and the craziness begins again, and we can all breathe a little easier that THEY haven't taken it all away just yet, and a good hunk of the old flavor still exists... Take the other weekend: start off with Lil' Bastard Anthony's birthday at the King Britt show, put on by the Massive Selector gang down at Club 6ix with Angel, Shaka and Jay. Beautiful night, great party, chillin' on the bar upstairs, listening to dancehall, drinking Strong Islands out of keg cups with AS Crew. Sunday evening and the re-formed Bulletproof crew throwing the first Boat Party of the year out on the Bay: we got DJ Revolution up in town for Strawberry, the sun is out, the mini-bar is in DJ Wisdom's record bag, and everything is lovely. Afterparty at Kate O'Brien's, after-AFTER party at Desiree's up in the Castro, and pretty soon it's Mimosas on her deck in the Monday morning sun. Our annual SummerCamp benefit campout up in the Sierra foothills approaches. Life is not bad. San Francisco, though sometimes painfully wounded, is far from dead. Be here now...

1) **PARADISE BOYS "GONNA MAKE YOU MINE"** (*PrinceHouse/US/12*) Although my man Jeffrodeezik and partner Bertie Pearson put this bad-ass little bitch out about six months ago, it's still most deserving of a review because a) it sounds like it came out in 1982; b) their latest, a cover of Jamie Principal/Frankie Knuckles's "Your Love," is boss; c) they fuckin' rule! Nor-Cal electro rock like you know you want it! Remixes by Blaktroniks, Broker/Dealer and Nikki Anderson. This month's cocktail winner.

2) **GREYBOY "GENEVIVE (QUANTIC RMX)"** (*Ubiquity/US/12*) San Diego covering 1973 Cymande reworked by Brighton's darling Quantic? Phat as hell, funky and instantly bang-able. A RedWine summer joint fo' SURE.

3) **DJ WISDOM "BEEF PATTY BREAKS"** (*Super Break/US/LP*) Ride mi donkey! After a decade of draining San Francisco's hip-hop scene of its Beck's Dark supply and spreading that lovely Poughkeepsie funk all over town, Papi Chocolate comes through with the GOODS. Ten ragga/hip-hop loops just waiting for your eager fingers to caress and manipulate like an underage chicken nipple. Lookie—our likkle boy's all growed up!

4) **AL GONZALEZ "EL RUMBON"** (*ReJoint/US/12*) Anyone who's ever caught Groove Merchant/ReJoint's Cool Chris or Vinnie Esparza rock 111 Minna or Hush Hush or any of this pair's hot little dance jams know just what they're capable of. This Al Gonzalez cut, off the forthcoming *Jazz Latino* compilation, is a perfect example, reminiscent of Ray Baretto's "Acid" for it's hypnotic, trance-like groove and floor-moving appeal.

5) **TAJAI "THE DUM DUM"** (*Hiero Imperium/US/12*) Tajai comes through like a bowl of unsweetened green tea next to a koi pond in the Japanese Tea Garden at Golden Gate Park. You know it's of a certain quality, and good for you, but the taste is a little sharp and different to your tongue at first. Upon repeated sips, you come to detect the individual flavors and intricate nuances hidden delicately within the brew, and how it's different at different times of day, and in different weather. Lovely, indeed. Props to Hiero, once again.

6) **ADVENTURE TIME "HI-TOP FADE PARADE"** (*Plug Research/US/7*) Adventure Time is Frosty and Daedelus from dublab.com and a million and a half weirdo LA hip-hop projects. Adventure Time is happy music. "Hi-Top Fade Parade" is Tim "Love" Lee wagging his beard around the Red Wine Social, drunk and happy as a clam, playing his little bag of 7"s and loving life. Ahhhh, joy.

7) **MADLIB "SHADES OF BLUE" EP** (*Blue Note/US/12*) Yeah, just go get it.

8) **UGLY DUCKLING "TURN IT UP"** (*Emperor Norton/US/12*) Ugly Duckling puzzled me until I figured out that they were Biz Markie/Beastie Boys-style clowns who exist inside the skits from Digital Underground's *Sex Packets* and De La's...*Is Dead*. Long live the hip-hop concept album! Viva the Majesticons! Viva "Turn It Up (Refried)"! That's a summertime groove right there, kid.

9) **DONNIE "CLOUD 9 (DJ SPINNA RMX)"** (*GiantStep/Motown/US/12*) Smooth as Sade, butter like Stevie, this is Donnie's most dancefloor-friendly joint to date—albeit a very touchy-feely dancefloor leading directly to the backseat of J.Boogie's car.

10) **CHERRYWINE "WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT"** (*DCide/US/12*) Bass-heavy electro hip-hop soul featuring Digable Planets's Butterfly on vocals. Somewhere right now, Prince is listening to this going, "Daaaaaamn!," just like the Alkaholiks song.

11) **NETTLE "FIRECAMP STORIES: REMIXES" EP** (*the Agriculture/US/12*) I love this fucking label so much, equally for their hypno-ambient dub-funk, as for their song titles and wordplay, as for their balls to even base a label on music this weird. The reason this is on the Lucky 13, by the way, is for the beatless "Unciviliz" remix by *i/o*. Sounds like an exhibit at the Exploratorium or a piece by Yoko Ono from the 1950s.

12) **DOUBLE IDENTITY "WE PLAY THE MUSIC"** (*Voltage/US/10*) And then there are these suspicious characters from Voltage dropping this dub-influenced broken-jazz bizness like San Francisco is some damn melting pot of global dancefloor culture. Watch out! **LUCKY 13) TIM'M WEST RED DIRT REVIVAL** (*Poz Trophy/US/book*) Teacher and poet Tim'm, a.k.a. 25 Percenter from Oakland's Deep Dickollective, shares his soul and life growing up gay, black and dirt-poor in the red dirt South. "My tribe? If you gotta ask, then nigga, you don't know. And all in my tribe is my niggas: females, shemales, girmen, boys-boys, Chinese, Caribbean and Polish alike." Powerful and beautiful and necessary.



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IN THE STUDIO MIRA CALIX

ENGLAND'S MIRA CALIX GIVES US A GUIDE TO HER STUDIO, AND CONFESSES THAT SHE'S NOT AFRAID TO MAKE SOME NOISE.

>> "I LIKE BEING OUTDOORS, SO IT WAS PERFECT: LEAVE A MICROPHONE IN A SHOE BOX AND THEN COME BACK IN HALF AN HOUR AND SEE WHAT YOU'VE CAUGHT."



XLR8R: How did it all start?

Mira Calix: I used to share a flat with a guy called Strictly Kev from Ninja Tune, and he had some guitar effects pedals hooked up to his decks. I just used to mess around with other peoples' records, and then I got a Roland 606 (drum machine) and a 202 (synth). It was just about having fun, and it still is. It took me ages to get things going—I was working, and I bought bits of kit really, really slowly.

XLR8R: How did you move on from your analog gear and get into using computers to compose music?

MC: Well, I didn't have an Atari [computer] at all. I missed that stage. I just went and wrote all my first stuff on the first Apple Power Mac, the 6100. I fooled around on other peoples' Ataris, but I never owned one. I am so uncool, I never had an Atari! I shouldn't admit to that, should I? With the Apple, I really wanted to write tracks, but I didn't really have many sound sources, just the Roland boxes and a sampler. The obvious thing was to go out and get sounds by recording them. Mostly, I went for natural things: trees and stones and all those things. I like being outdoors, so it was perfect: leave a microphone in a shoe box and then come back in half an hour and see what you've caught.

XLR8R: What sequencer do you use on the Mac?

MC: [Steinberg] Cubase. I'm one of the few people left using Cubase on the Mac. Everybody is like, "You must use Logic, it's so much better," but I'm perfectly happy. I don't think we will have Cubase for Mac for much longer because of the Emagic/Apple situation, but I'll be the last person left going "It's really good, honestly."

XLR8R: What is your sampler of choice?

MC: The Ensoniq ASR 10. It's got lovely filters, and I have the great big bastard keyboard version. But I'd never take it out on tour because it's so precious to me. When they delivered it, I was so excited because I had bought the last one left in the country—it was a shop model from Dunfermline in Scotland. I had wanted one for ages, and when I had the money, it was like "Oh no, they don't make them anymore," so I just rang everybody until I found one.

XLR8R: What equipment are you using for this tour?

MC: At the heart of my set up is, reluctantly, the laptop, just like everybody else! It is the simplest way, though—I'm only one person, so there's only so much that you can do. I tend to use a lot of effects live and make dub-style mixes, with everything separated out and then done through the desk. I don't use loads of plug-ins or any soft synths, so in a way I'm like a dinosaur wandering about, but I really like the physicality of things. That's why I like to do stuff on the desk. I know intrinsically what the EQ will do, and I think it's a much better EQ than on my computer. I love computers, and they make life really easy, but I would rather do things outside of them. I still like to use tape, and I do all my mixes live. It's bit of a joke: I

Sitting around at the sound check on her recent tour, Mira Calix (a.k.a. Chantal Passamonte) speaks with a gentle accent that highlights her South African roots. She's always been one of the more intriguing members of the Warp label's roster, shunning the boys-toys world of bedroom-studio isolation and software synths that her peers adore in favor of a more physical, organic approach to music-making at her studio in rural Suffolk. From her installation work with live insects to her new LP *Skimskitta*, Mira Calix's sound reflects her love of nature, her old-school experimental attitude, and a lack of pretention. *Peter Kirk*

have to do like 15 mixes to get it how I want it. I could do it all by MIDI, but it's not as much fun.

XLR8R: Have you ever broken anything in the line of duty?

MC: I've never actually broken anything myself. But ages ago I was doing a remix, and when I started the mixdown, my computer just exploded—and I actually have a recording of it exploding. The whole studio stank of electrical fire and I started to cry because I loved my computer. It felt like I had lost a family friend. I still have it, too—it sits in the corner of my studio.

Check out Mira Calix's discography on Warp Records, including the singles "Ilanga," "Pin Skeeling," "Peel Session" and "Prickle," and two full-length albums, *One on One* and *Skimskitta*. www.miracalix.com



In Mira Calix's studio: Ensoniq ASR 10 (left) and a Cubase project window



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FINAL MATCH?

HEADS UP AS WE PUT STANTON'S REVOLUTIONARY DIGITAL DJ TOOL FINAL SCRATCH AGAINST CYCLING '74'S MS. PINKY'S MAXI PATCH AND NATIVE INSTRUMENTS'S TRAKTOR DJ STUDIO IN A GLOVES-OFF BATTLE FOR MP3 PLAYBACK SUPREMACY!

As a DJ who's always enjoyed using CD technology alongside turntables, I've met with a lot of skepticism and ridicule over the years from both fans and other DJs. "How can you spin with CDs?," they ask. Some simply maintain that, if you're using CDs, you're not *really* DJing.

The stigma surrounding the use of digital technology in DJing originates in the fact that for so long, manipulating vinyl records provided the *only* way to truly be able to manipulate sounds and beats. Of course, even when CDs became the standard music medium in the 1990s, vinyl never truly went away.

Both the advent of personal computers and our increased everyday usage of the technology have made digital DJing more acceptable. New developments have allowed users to DJ in ways that even a few years ago seemed impossible. And filesharing systems like Napster, Kazaa, Limewire and Gnutella have made MP3, WAV, AIFF, and Apple's AAC the new formats for audio.

Among the recent first wave of DJ-related audio software, three products stand out: Stanton's Final Scratch, Native Instruments's Traktor DJ Studio 2.0 software, and Ms. Pinky's Maxi-Patch hybrid vinyl/software technology.

The most notable of these is Stanton's Final Scratch, a software/hardware combination that lets you spin on your traditional turntables plugged into to a special ScratchAmp that interacts with both the mixer and computer, allowing you to essentially "play" digital audio via specially made time-encoded vinyl records. With Final Scratch, the digital music reacts to the way you manipulate a physical

you'll need a little time to adjust to looking at sound waves onscreen rather than the end of the track on the vinyl. The hardest thing is simply getting your head wrapped around the idea that you're really playing digital audio files via your turntables. Detroit's Matthew Dear said that one thing he really likes about FS is that he can produce a track on his laptop, then try it out in a club two hours later.

Although I believe in Final Scratch, I'm wary of relying solely on my laptop for a DJ performance. I would still bring along enough records in my bag for a set in case of computer or software problems. What could be more horrifying than having your computer crash midway through a thumping set in front of a raging crowd?

Native Instruments offers Traktor DJ Studio 2.0, a software-only program that allows the user to DJ completely via his/her laptop or computer. In other words, no need for a mixer, nor turntables, nor CD players. It's all done via the software interface, which includes visual representations of the track and virtual knobs to control the EQ, along with cueing, looping, automatic beat-matching functions and other crazy options. While there are an increasing amount of DJs that endorse Traktor (including DJ Hell, Swayzak, John Tejada and Terranova, among others), you can't completely ignore the visual impact of performing on turntables, at least not yet. Traktor DJ Studio 2.0 is a great tool and time will tell if people will accept it like the standard analog DJ interface.

Which brings us to our third option, Cycling '74's Ms. Pinky's Maxi-Patch, a hybrid vinyl/software technology fairly similar to Final Scratch in that the user can manipulate digital files via specially encoded vinyl records. The difference—besides the lack of the ScratchAmp (you instead use a two-channel input audio converter and need phono preamps)—is that this software allows the user to manipulate both audio *and* video files. You can literally *scratch video files*, incorporating both the visual and audio in your mixes. If you have a video output from your computer, you can effectively display the video you're scratching in real time. Seriously amazing stuff here. The jaws definitely drop for this one.

In line with the funny name, the Ms. Pinky setup also includes pink and black vinyl records specifically designed for this audio/visual interface, much like Final Scratch. Although the company insists its technology differs from FS—the vinyl contains specially modulated "physical location stamps" instead of the timecoding used by Stanton—the concept isn't that much different. The computer interface onscreen also contains the pink hues, and is less complex than the Traktor interface, offering users visual representations of audio files, as well as the options to loop, beat-match and process FX. And PC users will be out of luck, as Ms. Pinky's only works on Mac operating systems.

So budding DJs can now go off in a variety of different directions. It's truly amazing to behold what the future may hold for the DJ artform. But at the end of the day, it still comes down to basic innate skills: the ability to mix effectively and choose tracks carefully. There's still no way to compete with the infinite possibilities of the human mind. *Tim Pratt*

>> WHAT COULD BE MORE HORRIFYING THAN HAVING YOUR COMPUTER CRASH MIDWAY THROUGH A THUMPING SET IN FRONT OF A RAGING CROWD?



Clockwise from top: Ms. Pinky's Maxi Patch, Final Scratch setup, Traktor DJ Studio

record, including pitching, cueing, spinning and needle-dropping. The product has impressed many DJs, including Richie Hawtin (he produced his 2001 album *DE9: Closer to the Edit* entirely with Final Scratch), John Acquaviva (a spokesperson for the product), DJ Craze, Kevin Saunderson, Josh Wink, Matthew Dear and a slew of others.

After playing around with Final Scratch, I can honestly say that this could definitely be the future of DJing, because it offers so many more options, especially for the travelling DJ. Instead of toting around a heavy bag of 50 or 100 slabs of your hottest vinyl, you can tote around 5,000 tracks. It's pretty easy to hook up: you just plug your turntables and mixer into the ScratchAmp, which plugs into the computer via a USB connection from the amp. You'll need a fairly speedy computer—at least a Pentium III with 500MHz or a G3 Apple with 128 MB of RAM and 200 MB of free space on the hard disk, and using Windows 98 and above, OS X on Apple, or Linux as its operating system.

Once you download the software, you have to calibrate the turntables to ensure you're getting a suitable reading on your computer, which offers you a visual representation of the audio file you're using. Although the interface is fairly intuitive it does require some practice to figure out its capabilities, and



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69MACHINES

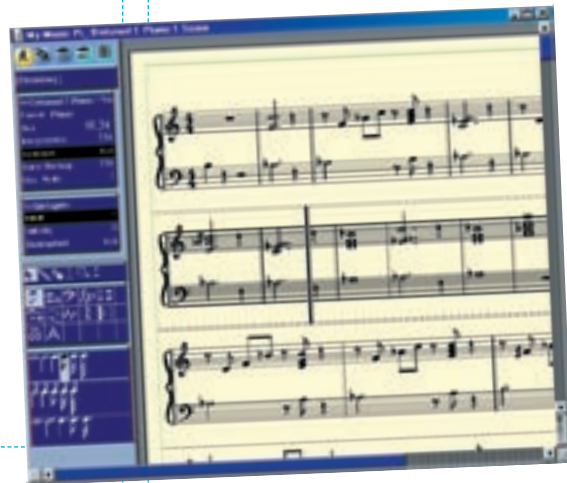
DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC?

Magix is setting the standard for high-feature/low-cost software for the PC, and **Studio Deluxe 2004** is a perfect example. For about sixty bucks, you get a high-powered MIDI and audio studio, and while it can't quite match up with high-end audio suites, what you get for the price is pretty astounding. The MIDI demo tracks packaged with the software sound like the music you'd hear coming out of a keyboard store in the mid-'80s. With that said, it's up to you to take these tools into your own hands and create good music.

Depending on your processor power, you can get up to 64 audio tracks and 2,000 MIDI tracks! Music Studio comes with a variety of virtual instruments, like an electric piano, synthesizers, drum machines and more. Significantly, besides the included instruments and effects, you can use high-quality outsourced VST instruments and effects made by higher-end companies. For something so cheap, there sure are a lot of frills, with easy-to-use interfaces similar to Reason, Cubase or Cakewalk. The Amp simulator is hot, as is the vocoder and the various de-noising software—perfect for cleaning up vinyl pops, clicks and other noise if you want to transfer your collection to digital. Magix have gone out of their way to offer you everything you could want, even things you might not have expected of a low priced sequencer, such as scoring and notation possibilities. *Jesse Terry*

MSRP: \$79.99

www.magix.com



>> ...IT'S UP TO YOU TO TAKE THESE TOOLS INTO YOUR OWN HANDS AND CREATE GOOD MUSIC.

THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

Girl 2.0 represents a simple step forward in audio presentation. This bit of software lets you mix together just about any type of common sound file on the fly, with quick and easy looping and effect controls. Similar in concept to Ableton Live—though not as pretty to look at—Girl offers many useful features (including support for MP3s); Mac users and especially laptop DJs ought to seriously investigate this software before investing in anything else.

With Girl, each audio file plays through a module, and you can have as many modules as your hardware can handle. The software allows you to loop in realtime, to sync loops and related effects, even to use up to three VST plug-in effects on a module. The built-in delay and filters work fairly well, and the granular feature enables some very odd pitch and timing applications.

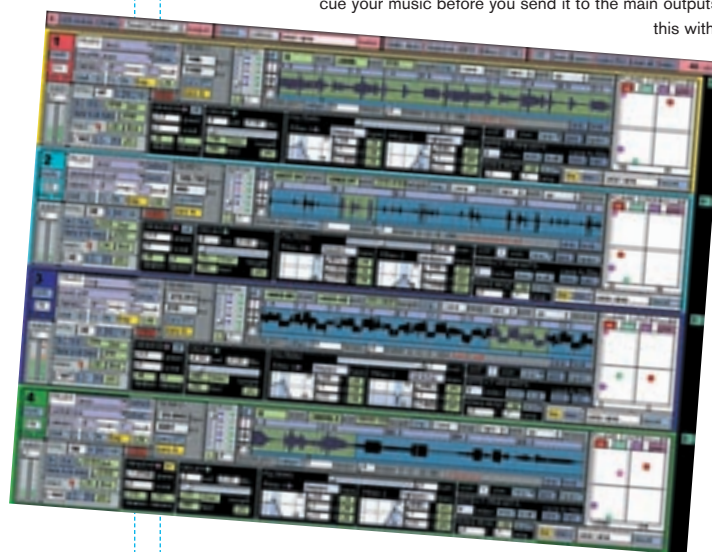
Girl is nicely modifiable to 5.1 surround sound or innovative output arrays of up to 16 speakers. With the monitor option and four channels of output from an audio interface, you can even cue your music before you send it to the main outputs. Of course, an option to do this with a laptop's headphone output would be most helpful.

>> THIS BIT OF SOFTWARE LETS YOU MIX TOGETHER JUST ABOUT ANY TYPE OF COMMON SOUND FILE ON THE FLY...

You can use Girl by itself or connect using VST, ReWire or DirectConnect into many other popular programs, including ProTools, Cubase and Reason. There's also a beta version for Mac OSX that works reliably well. Kindly priced at \$99, it's worth your while to take a look at this Girl.

Rob Riddle
MSRP: \$99

www.yowstar.com



ASK ROBOTSPEAK!

XLR8R's New Gear Advice Column

It's our new column, where you, the reader, query the gear and technology experts at computer musician retail spot Robotspeak. Got a question about your bedroom and studio production and DJ gear? Fire away!

Dear Robotspeak,

How much money should I save to set up a basic home studio? Can you recommend some decent, but small, studio monitors?
Amy Qwon, Riverside, CA

Amy,

Based on your needs and how you make your music, you could set up your home studio at a lot of different levels. It's possible now to set up a studio for under \$1000, and it can be done even cheaper if you go with an all-in-one software package like Propellerhead's Reason (\$275). The average setup comes in at right around the \$1000 mark, and expands from there. Assuming you already own a capable MAC or Windows PC, a "basic" studio setup includes some or all of the following:

- Multi-track sequencing software to arrange, record and mix your music that also serves as a host for software instruments and effects (\$100 to \$1000). Music can be made with just software.
 - Sound cards and MIDI interfaces serve the purpose of getting audio and MIDI in and out of your computer-software rig, and are key to any studio setup using external gear. MIDI interfaces run from \$50 to \$600. Sound cards can cost anywhere from \$100 for a simple audio interface to \$1200 for multitrack units with built-in mic pre-inputs.
 - Control surfaces are keyboards and slider/fader boxes that control software-based instruments. These can range anywhere from \$100 to \$1000 for weighted, piano-style keyboards.
 - A good monitoring source is key to taking production to the next level. Quality monitors give you a flat frequency response that shows you how your music will sound on most systems. Quality monitors range from \$100 dollar headphones all the way up to thousand-dollar near-field monitors.
 - As for a recommendation for small but good monitors, I would check out the Event TRS 5 studio Monitors at \$325. They're some of the best within that price range.
- Good luck with your new studio.

Pete Robotspeak

Have a burning DJ gear or computer techy question? Send your query to: tomas@xlr8r.com, put "ASK ROBOTSPEAK" in the subject line, and your answer may appear in the next issue! Check Robotspeak's website at: www.robotspeak.com

EXPRESS CREATE

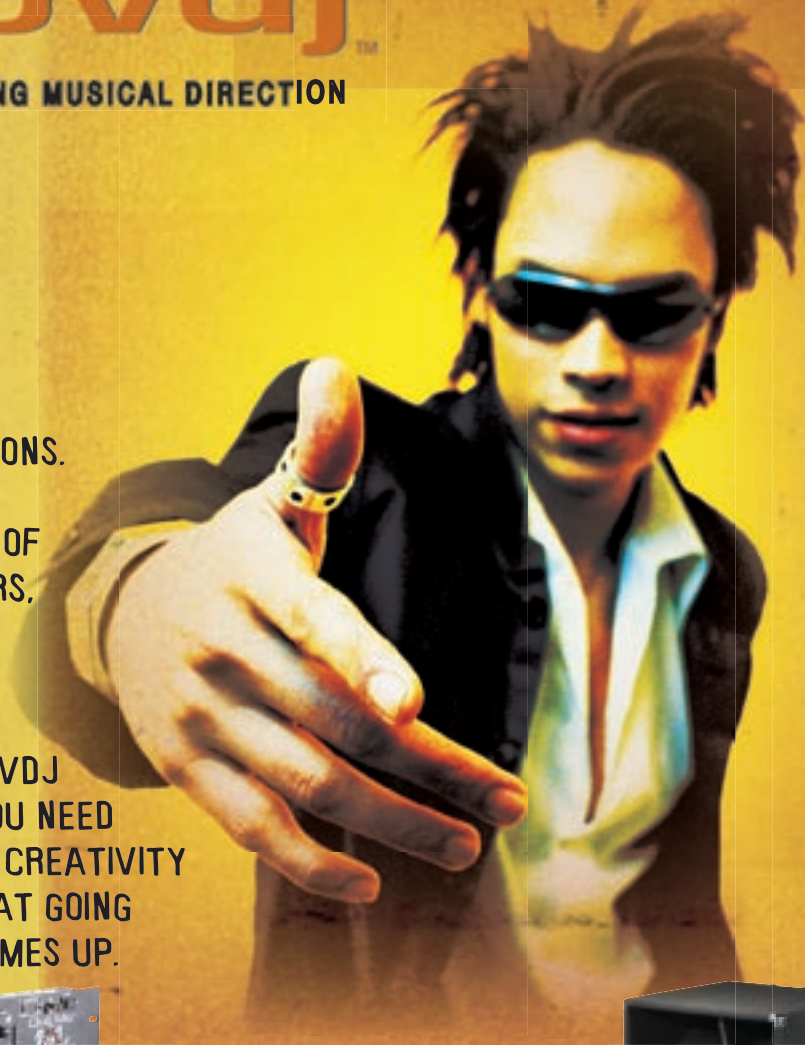
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HERE'S THE REASON

Propellerheads Reason 2.5, the new update for Sweden's most popular music export since Abba, arrives just under a year after the composition software's secondary platform debuted. So what could be so much better about a ".5" version? A vast amount, as it turns out. In fact, it could be argued that Propellerheads should have waited and released this superior collection of tools as version 2. But true to their step-wise learning curve—both in the program itself, and with additions to it—each version has successfully built fluidly upon the last while introducing a range of new concepts and tools. It's like that math class you hated at the beginning of the semester, and in which you were acing tests by the end of the quarter. Reason is an intuitive-learning program that has music novices quickly up to speed with some of digital sequencing's more complex activities. Plus, it's bloody fun.

The electronic and dance music community was the first to embrace Reason versions 1 and 2. But since that community comprises a tiny fraction of all producers making music, Propellerheads fashioned version 2.5's new tools and sound files to woo music-makers from across the genre board—from thrash metal through to dub, jazz, R&B—to Reason's platform.

The basics of Reason include a mixing desk that looks exactly like a common studio mixer; an analog synthesizer that plays both single note and multiple note sounds (really mad, squelchy, crystalline sounds); a drum machine with sound patches from classic robotic machines like the 808 and 909 to acoustic jazz trap kits; and extremely easy-to-learn samplers, loop players and effects. Reason 2.5 adds to this repertoire a vocoder, advance reverb unit and a "sound destruction unit" called the Scream 4, which will appeal to any aspiring Kurt or Courtney out there.

Dub fanatics will enjoy the amazing capabilities of the RV-7000 advanced reverb device, which includes such King Tubby classics as spring reverb, space echo and ping-pong, and the various echoes are grouped by which instrument they'd suit best: voice, drum, synth, etc. Another great effects device in 2.5 is the UN-16 Unison chorus patch. It essentially adds four, eight or 16 detuned chorus "voices" to whatever instrument to which it's attached. For example, if you have it affect a Rhodes keyboard, you can generate a watery resonance to the notes that allows for some very spacey Lonnie Liston Smith-style moments.

The BV-512 vocoder unit is a sophisticated tool that ensures a wide range of synthetic vocal treatments. In addition, the unit can also be used as an EQ to add a special crispness to any instrument.

The addition of more patches to the Orkester sound bank library offers dozens more sounds to the Reason palette, including more brass, woodwind, percussion and sound effects.

What I like most about Reason 2.5 is the navigational ease of the new functions. Some drawbacks include the need for more memory and processor power as your song becomes more layered; I've often maxed out my CPU by simply using one too many samples with the Dr. Rex device. It would be helpful if the program came with an offline vocal tutorial module, as some of us don't have access to a high-speed internet connection to access Propellerheads' range of online help. But that's a relatively minor obstacle when you consider the overall freedom that the rest of this package offers. *Tomas Palermo*

MSRP: \$299.00

www.propellerheads.se

>> IT'S LIKE THAT MATH CLASS YOU HATED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER, AND IN WHICH YOU WERE ACING TESTS BY THE END OF THE QUARTER.

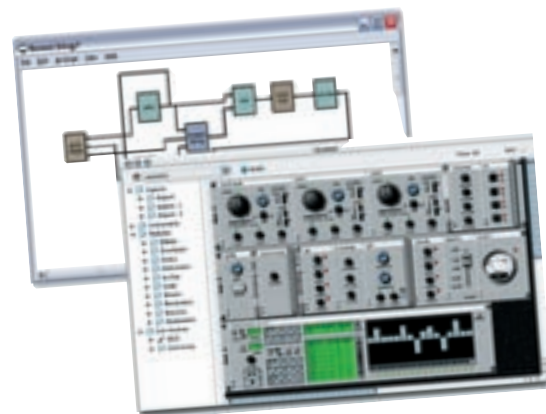
THE PERFECT MODULAR

Applied Acoustics TASSMAN is a synth-lover's wet dream: a physical modeling modular synthesizer. For those of you who aren't music geeks (i.e. 2% of XLR8R readers), this means spectacularly realistic reproduction of instruments, beat-making possibilities similar to Propellerheads' Reason or Native Instruments' Reaktor, and a whole lot more. Tassman is packaged into a plug-in that can be used alone or inside Cubase, Nuendo, Pro Tools or most other sequencing/recording programs. The program opens up looking like a Outlook Express browser, with many presets readily available in folders on the side. You can create your instruments piece by piece and configure sounds however you like, or dig into the 50 instruments and over 1000 presets provided—in short, you can get as deep as you want with the Tassman.

What makes the Tassman different than other plug-ins is that it actually generates sound by mimicking the processes that physical objects go through to make sound, rather than reproducing sound via sampling or estimating with wave generators. While this makes for excellent sounds (many of these, including the marimba and vibraphone, are the best I've heard), it also makes for somewhat clunky performance—the cost of excellent sounds is a toll on your CPU's resources. Overall, a very cool plug-in for those in need of highly realistic sounds. *Jesse Terry*

MSRP: \$449.00

www.applied-acoustics.com



>> ...IT ACTUALLY GENERATES SOUND BY MIMICKING THE PROCESSES THAT PHYSICAL OBJECTS GO THROUGH TO MAKE SOUND...



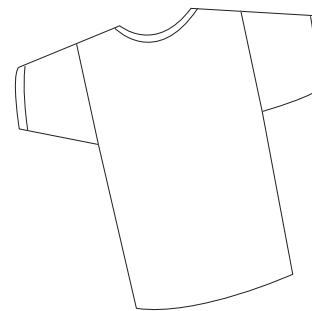
QUICKIE

John J. Volanski's *Sound Recording Advice for the Home Recording Studio* is a useful D.I.Y. reference book describing the ins and outs of building, setting up and buying the various parts of a studio, what gear to buy and where, microphone and instrument techniques and placement, mixing and more. A great little book useful to both novices and home-pros. *Jesse Terry*

Pros: Great tips and a plethora of web resources, up-to-date tips intended for musicians on a tight budget.

Cons: Not as much info for the rich and experienced; opinionated, and will probably be outdated soon.

MSRP: US \$19.95

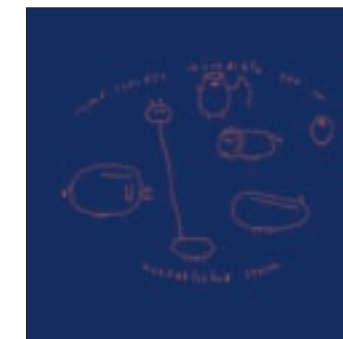


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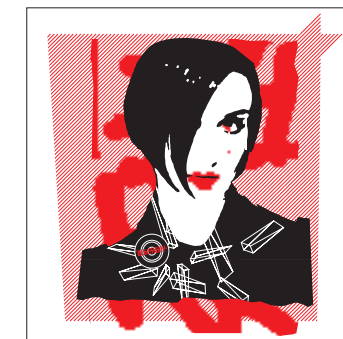
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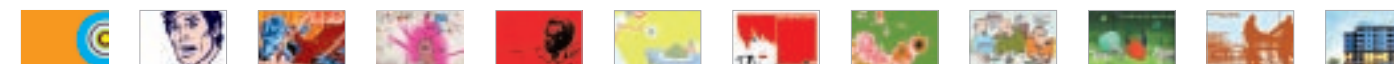


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VIS-ED KENZO MINAMI

NEW YORK GRAPHIC DESIGNER KENZO MINAMI WALKS THE TIGHTROPE BETWEEN COMMERCIALISM AND INDEPENDENCE, AND MAINTAINS A TENSE BALANCE BETWEEN TWO STAUNCHLY DIFFERENT CREATIVE MODES. HERE'S HOW.

TEXT JAMES FRIEDMAN IMAGES KENZO MINAMI

Kenzo Minami has the effortless cool that kids in mesh trucker hats and ironic t-shirts wish they had. He can barely walk ten feet anywhere south of 14th St. without bumping into somebody he knows, and I can't remember the last cool party in New York where he didn't show. Though he studied industrial design at Parsons, Minami has worked as a set designer, animator, interface designer, and partner in Panoptic, a creative agency based in Chinatown.

Incredibly accomplished at the young age of 29, Minami is also adding graphic artist to his list of self-made success stories. Combining bold vector-based compositions with a referential vocabulary that draws from history, philosophy, fashion and music, his work is quickly finding a devoted fanbase. DJ Hell recently hired Minami to design the forthcoming Gigolo compilation, and Matthew Clark, founder of the now-defunct Houston Gallery, pegged him to create the inaugural installation in Nike's brand-new concept space in New York.

With an upcoming show at the Surface To Air col-

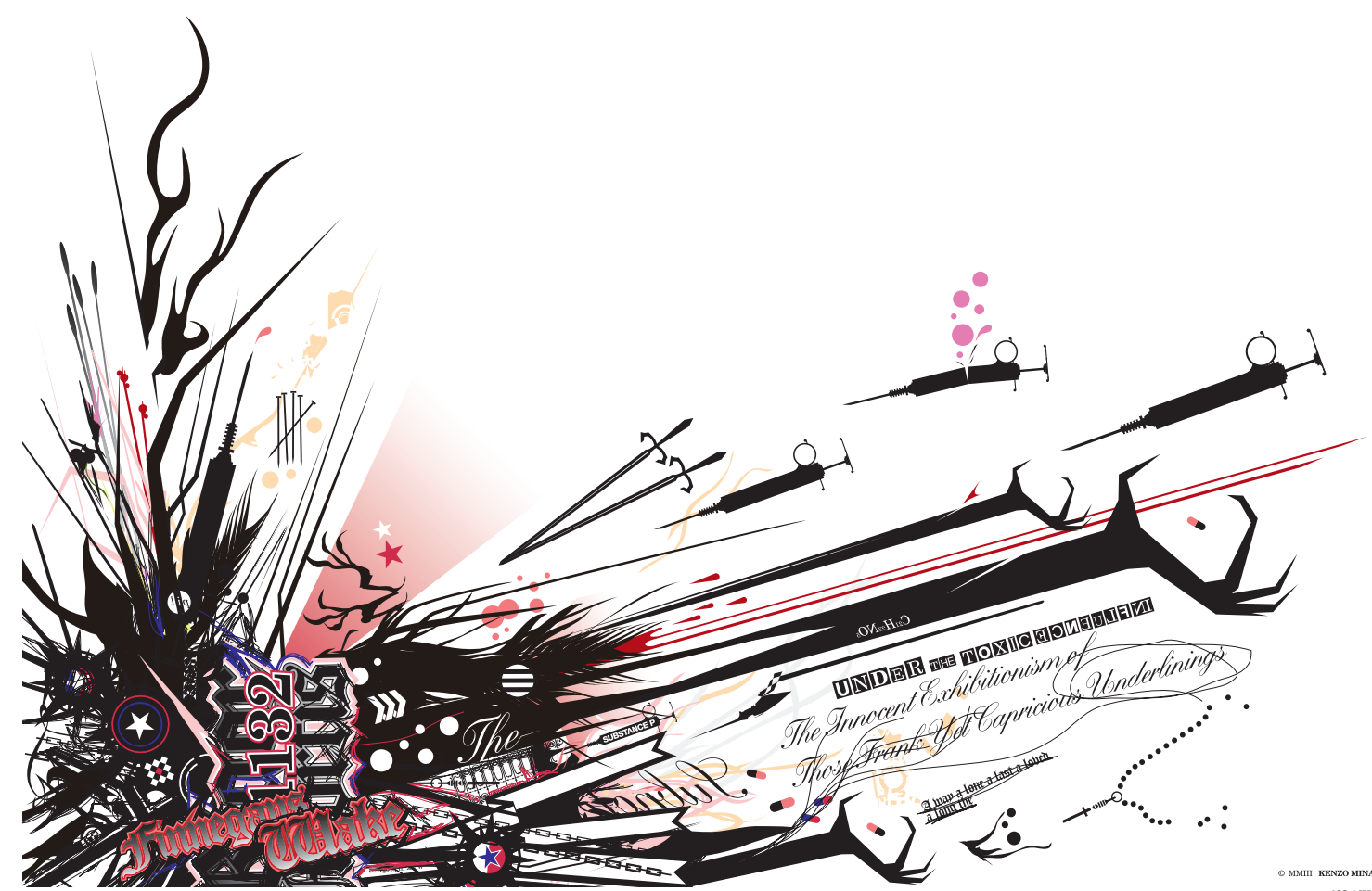
lective's Paris shop and a work schedule bordering on complete insanity, Minami remains thoughtful and circumspect about his work and his position at the mercurial crossroads of fashion, art, music and cool.

XLR8R: How did a kid from Kobe, Japan end up in New York studying industrial design?

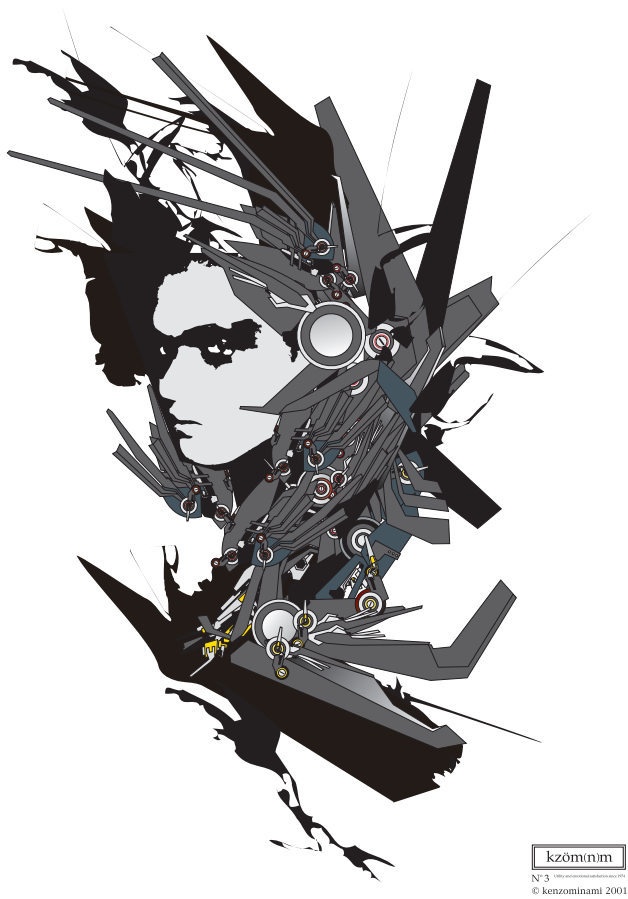
Kenzo Minami: When I was 18, I was studying philosophy in Japan, and then I decided to move. I quit school and went to San Diego, because I had no money. I spoke no English at all, but I knew this guy who would let me crash on his couch. Basically, I learned English from talking to beach bums. Eleven months later, I moved to New York to get my book together and study industrial design. I never wanted to be an industrial designer, but I wanted to learn the skills to build stuff. Two years in, I started doing set design for the Sci Fi Channel and MTV and stuff. Basically I worked as a set designer while I was in school, so I started getting credit. I made a deal—if they didn't give me credit, I would leave.

XLR8R: So how did you go from studying industrial design to working with Panoptic?

KM: I was doing all this set design while I was a student, and I slowly started doing a lot of computer stuff, learning to do 3-D design for school and animation. Eventually I started [filming] stuff because I wanted to use parts of it in combination with the animation, and then I was shooting more and more stuff. I started doing graphic design because I wanted to do the titles for my film stuff. It was like a chain reaction, like dominoes or something. [A] professor I had at Parsons, who also taught at Harvard, invited me to do some work with the MIT Media Lab on interface design. It was really geeky shit, but it was so fun to do. Back then, websites were popping up everywhere, but interfaces were designed either by graphic designers who knew nothing about the ergonomics of human interaction to the information, or by technicians who had no aesthetic sensibility at all. I joined Panoptic around 1998. At the time, we were doing a lot of music video stuff, working



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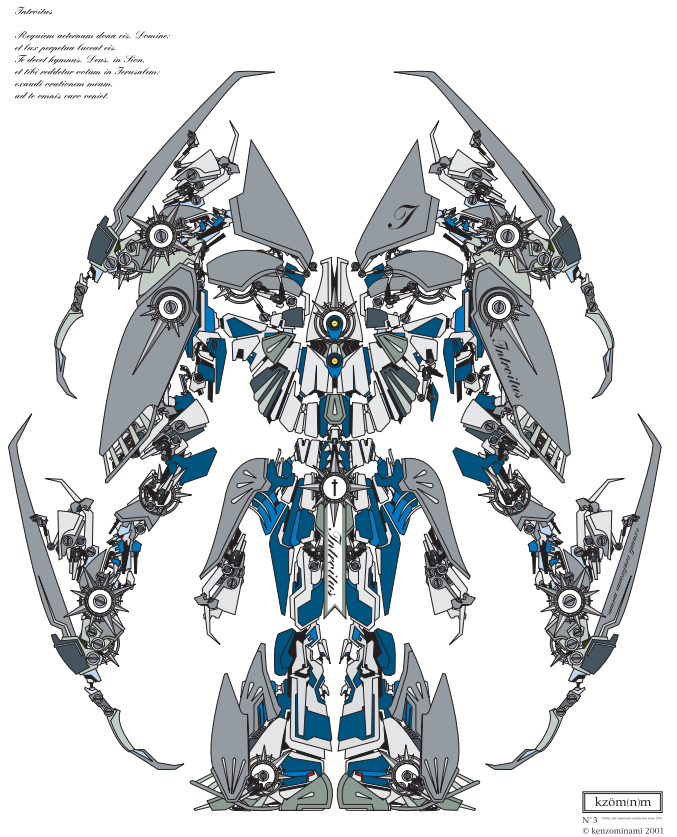
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“IT WAS
SORT OF
LIKE FRENCH
POETS
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MEGADETH”



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with Wu-Tang Clan. But when things started getting commercial, a couple of the guys decided to leave. Now Panoptic, which is me and my partner Gary, do campaigns for Coca-Cola and that sort of thing. I started doing my own work as a reaction to this commercial stuff. Panoptic's become a corporate company, but we want to keep it sort of loose. I'm doing my own stuff, and he's doing his video art and we still do image campaigns and that kind of thing.

XLR8R: How would you describe your own work?
KM: My own stuff is graphic art. I don't know what other people call it, but the easy term for it is graphic art. I still do animations and film stuff, but that's like a business now; that's my job in the daytime. All the art stuff for which I use my own name started off for fun. I never had plans to take over the world with this shit or something. Essentially it was just for my friends and absolutely non-commercial.

XLR8R: Would you like your art to become a business or do you want to keep it separate?
KM: Everything has happened because my friends passed me work, and I went along with it because it seemed fun. Slowly things have snowballed. DJ Hell found me months and months before I even met him. He called me up from Germany because he had seen my work. Matt Clark saw a sticker I had done and just called me. First he wanted to buy some prints I had hanging at Zakka, but then he decided to

do something like Nike versus me. Instead of just selling him some work, I painted the entire New York concept space.

XLR8R: It's ironic that all the stuff you were doing to get away from the commercial work has become another commercial outlet in and of itself...
KM: Exactly. It's really tricky for me as well. I was trained as a designer, and I know where I stand in that context. When I'm hired as a designer, I know how to approach it. They tell you what they want. When somebody approaches me under my own name, which is as an artist, I am supposed to tell them what I want. Both Nike and DJ Hell let me do what I wanted to do. They saw it and took it. Since I'm used to the whole design process, going back and forth and all that, it sort of threw me off. You have to get used to this new dynamic. When you do your own stuff, the lack of limitations can throw you off, and you can feel sort of lost. That's why the theme of the piece is really important to me, like a framing principle. It's not exactly a limitation, because I can do whatever the hell I want, but I kind of create boundaries by forcing myself to articulate that theme.

XLR8R: Your work seems to have a lot going on conceptually, with all sorts of symbols, icons and images getting juxtaposed against one another. Can you explain your approach?
KM: For me, style is generated between an idea and

context. Style is the visual manifestation. I love pulling style out of context and swapping each component with something that has nothing to do with the original. If you have good taste or skill, you can organize things neatly. But there's still a gap. That is really interesting to me, the way things don't really fit together but you almost force them to. For instance, I did these prints for this clothing project, and the theme was the Eighties. Since everybody was obsessed with the 1980s and that style, my whole idea was to combine the 1880s and the 1980s. I did three prints, and each motif was taken from the end-of-the-century French avant garde, like Erik Satie and those people. Back in the day, poets and composers were the rock stars, living this glamorous life. So I took their whole idea and image and combined it with a heavy metal band from the 1980s. So it was sort of like French poets meet Megadeth or whatever. That's the whole thing, to mix up the context and imagery. I also did a series of pieces based on *Finnegan's Wake* by Joyce, *The Castle* by Kafka, and *The Flower Of Evil* by Baudrillard. Even when I was studying industrial design, every time I did a project there was a part of me from when I studied philosophy. It sounds really pretentious, but nobody has that approach. I have all these ideas behind my work, but I'm not trying to preach anything. If people just think my work is cool, I'm happy with that. But if I can grab someone's attention because it looks cool and they dig deeper, that's better.



XLR8R (ISSN 1526-4246) is published monthly with bimonthly issues in January/February, March/April and July/August for \$16 a year by Amalgam Media, Inc., 425 Divisadero Street #203A, San Francisco, CA 94117. Application to Mail at Periodicals Storage Rate is Pending in San Francisco, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to XLR8R, 1388 Haight Street, #105, San Francisco, CA 94117.

TBC FEAR MANAGEMENT

FREQUENTLY AHEAD OF HIS TIME IN POINTING OUT AMERICA'S SOCIAL ILLS, AUTHOR/PRODUCER MIKE GRAY FIRES AWAY AT THE CURRENT STATE OF US FEDERAL POLICIES.

Mike Gray is no stranger to controversy. His 1998 book on America's drug war, *Drug Crazy*, was so disturbing that it caused at least one staunch Republican, Governor Gary Johnson of New Mexico, to go against the grain and throw his support behind legalization. In its own way, Gray's tough campaign against capital punishment made another Republican governor, George Ryan of Illinois, rethink his position on the death penalty. That issue is chronicled in Gray's newest book, *The Death Game*, which hit the shelves at the same time as his re-released treatise on America's dangerous nuclear game, *The Warning: Accident at Three Mile Island*.

Eerily enough, Gray also wrote the screenplay for *The China Syndrome* before Three Mile Island ever entered the American consciousness. On top of that, the guy was, of all things, a producer for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. So whether you're talking science fact or fiction, Gray's had his finger on the pulse long before you felt the breath on the back of your neck. And he's got nothing but bad news for you.

XLR8R: *There's a chapter in your recent book, Busted, called "Your Bill of Rights," which chronicles the degradation of civil liberties over the last few decades. And what's scary is we didn't think that it could get worse. But then there was 9/11.*

Mike Gray: Right. The founding fathers would have had these cats by the throat. If George Washington was around right now, the first thing he'd do is whip out his goddamn sword. We're drifting towards fascism in this country.

XLR8R: *How do you feel that the war on drugs and the war on terrorism are similar?*

MG: Well, they're inspired by the same technique—fear management. It's an absolutely essential component of political manipulation. I think Nixon was the grandmaster of fear management up until Karl Rove. Actually, compared with Bush, Nixon was an intellectual giant.

XLR8R: *Why do we declare war on abstracts like drugs and terrorism, and no longer declare war against countries that we're invading, bombing or occupying?*

MG: Because it's tremendously useful. The war on terror is totally open-ended, even though Bush declared victory after landing on the aircraft carrier. But he didn't call it

victory—he called it "the end of hostilities in Iraq," because it's clear that they have a list and want to keep this going. And that makes it possible to keep the public's eye off the dime, as it were. The economy is going down the drain, and we have a serious potential for deflation not experienced since the '30s. What better way to keep people's minds off that than to have another war between now and the election?

XLR8R: *Speaking of outside threats and drug wars, how does American foreign policy towards Colombia fit into the war on terror and US economic aims in that region?*

MG: That is truly a hopeless adventure, and we know it. We've spent billions down there in eradication efforts over the last 10 years, and we've managed to double and re-double cocaine production in the Andes. What's more, we've encouraged them to start manufacturing heroin! So you wouldn't exactly call that a huge success. And yet they're adding more money to it as we speak. How do you account for that? Well, there are two reasons. One is that we're trying to suppress the Marxist guerillas down there. The other is that we can't actually say that we're directly involved, because it has too many direct echoes of Vietnam. People are afraid of being sucked into a jungle. And the terrible thing is that it's destroying the country.

XLR8R: *Surveillance has now become an inextricable part of everyday life. Is privacy a thing of the past?*

MG: It is. You have no more privacy. Assume every phone conversation—including this one—is being listened to. Once the government has the technology, somebody is going to use it, whether they're authorized or not. And unfortunately, you're going to have unscrupulous people gaining access to your personal knowledge and perhaps creating havoc in your life. And there's not a goddamn thing you can do about it, because it's perfectly legitimate. The PATRIOT Act allows the government to come into your house, duplicate your hard drive and split without ever letting you know anything about it. The only way you would ever find out is when the evidence comes out in court. That's a whole different ballgame.

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